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Failure in the classroom : a study of differentiated expectations for children in two urban elementary schools.

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FAILURE IN THE CLASSROOM: A STUDY OF DIFFERENTIATED EXPECTATIONS FOR CHILDREN IN TWO URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

A Dissertation Presented

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother...

MARY KONTOS MARINAKIS

...a bicultural, limited-English-speaking deaf woman who met challenge and bias with wit, intelligence and strength, and never thought of herself as handicapped.

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ABSTRACT

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FEBRUARY 1993

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This dissertation analyzes key factors which influence the negative expectations that classroom teachers hold for certain students whom they perceive to be low achievers and whom they refer for placement in special education. An examination of bias and differentiated expectations in classrooms is conducted in two urban elementary schools and is based on the hypothesis that the children who fail are most often those who differ from their teachers in social class, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, learning style and behaviors, and gender.

The first target school is identified as having a low rate (16%) of referral to special education, while the other school is identified as having a high rate (32%) of referral to special education. Twelve regular education teachers from each school complete questionnaires about their experiences with and attitudes towards low-achieving students. Each identifies successful and unsuccessful students and then describes him/herself as a learner. Student records are examined also to determine commonalties in the traits of those students referred to special education for remedial or

compensatory instruction. Finally, comparisons of school philosophy and school climate are made between the two target schools.

The findings of this study indicate that the misperceptions and life experiences of classroom teachers are important influences on the negative stereotyping and lowered expectations directed toward certain students. In the target schools, veteran as well as less experienced male and female teachers respond more favorably to students who resemble themselves ethnically, socioeconomically, and in learning style, and less favorably to those students who differ. Statistical significance is found when matching the learning characteristics selected by teachers to describe their successful students with learning characteristics they select when describing their own traits as learners. Of the students identified as unsuccessful and referred to special education, a disproportionate number are minority and male and are described by teachers as having problems with motivation, temperament, and need for direction. These and other reasons for referrals cited by teachers in both schools are similar and reflect poorly understood bias toward ethnic, racial, and linguistic minority children as well as misinformation about the developmental differences between boys and girls.

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INTRODUCTION

Massachusetts holds distinction and a reputation for being the first in the nation to implement many technological, educational, and social service innovations. Progressive social, health, and economic regulations have provided for a range of personal protections such as no-fault auto insurance, no-fault divorce, and universal health care, all of which have been designed to improve citizen access to needed services. However, educational equity, opportunities for success, and the delivery of basic services have not been provided to significant numbers of its youngest residents, many attending public schools in the state.

In part due to its unenviable position of being 38th among all states in the amount of public dollars allocated to education and in part due to its system of archaic regulatory procedures and funding formulas, Massachusetts supports a disparate patchwork of more than 300 public school systems and districts. While some of these districts evidence outstanding programming for students, the majority are only able to maintain minimum standards. Nearly one out of every five students in Massachusetts drops out of school prior to graduation from high school, having attended an under-equipped, poorly maintained school building (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1987). In addition, children in Massachusetts schools have a high probability of being excluded from mainstream, regular education classes and being placed in special education programs. With 17% of its school-age population identified as having special needs and needing special education, Massachusetts is again first in the nation. This incidence figure is rivaled by the next highest state, New Jersey,

which refers only 8% of its students to special education (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1991a).

Concurrent with the rise in the number of children being placed in special education is the continuing diversification of the student body in public schools. Not only have the numbers of language and ethnic/racial minority children grown significantly, but also the incidence of children with mild to substantial handicaps and those who are economically disadvantaged has increased twofold in regular education classrooms during the past 20 years. With these changes the classrooms and students of the 1990s are presenting formerly unknown complexity and challenges for many teachers in urban and suburban settings. Many of today's teachers were trained in the 1950s and 1960s and are struggling to meet the academic and social needs of students whom they perceive to be different and perhaps less able than children of previous generations.

Of significance is the fact that students who fail and drop out of school share many characteristics with students labeled as special needs or disabled learners. Increasingly, disproportionate numbers of students from both groups (predominantly male) consist of children of color, children who speak English as a new language, and children from poor families. Consistently, these students have experienced not only poor achievement in school but also the negative expectations of adults, primarily classroom teachers.

Similarly, teachers who maintain negative and low expectations for the approximately 30% of students who fail have characteristics in common. These teachers, and in fact most teachers in Massachusetts, are mid-career professionals with an average age of 43. Many have been teaching for more than 25 years, hold a master of education degree, and have taught the same

grade level in the same school throughout their professional careers (Massachusetts Educational Personnel Census, 1990).

This study examines the commonalties among the teachers who hold differentiated expectations for certain students, the children who fail, and the factors influencing school placement decisions, and answers the following questions:

1. Do individual teachers refer children of similar backgrounds for special help?

2. What student characteristics are most commonly identified by teachers as the reasons for referrals to special education?

3. What characteristics are shared by teachers who refer large numbers of students to special education?

4. What characteristics are shared by teachers who refer small numbers of children outside of the classroom?

5. Are teachers likely to refer children like or unlike themselves in socioeconomic level, cultural background, ethnicity, and gender?

6. What recommendations can be made about limiting referrals to special education which lead to stigmatization, lowered self-esteem, patchwork instruction/learning, and insignificant improvement in student achievement?

7. Is the referral rate to special education more reflective of teacher attitudes and training or the culture of individual school buildings?

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A. Failed Legislation

Despite the plethora of legislative and judicial mandates enacted during the past 30 years to insure appropriate and effective public education for all school-age children, most schools in America still fail to treat students equitably and fail to develop learning environments in which all students can become high achievers. Court-ordered desegregation plans of the 1960s and 70s have been insufficient and essentially unsuccessful in improving the achievement levels of minority students. Title IX, passed in 1972, has not eliminated sexual discrimination in schools. Similarly, laws affecting the education and employment of the handicapped (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1991, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as well as Massachusetts State Law, Chapter 766, enacted by the General Court in 1972) have not assured the acceptance and success of special needs individuals in the non-handicapped world.

While these laws have provided impetus for change and have increased opportunities for diverse groups of students within public schools, they have been hindered from full implementation by conditions not directly under court or legislative control. Factors such as the inequitable distribution of resources between and among communities and schools; the inadequacy of preservice and inservice training programs for teachers; the lack of spiritual and financial support from federal and local governments; the increasing physical and psychological stresses placed on today's young people; the

rigidity of traditional educational practices and procedures; and importantly, the stereotyping attitudes and behaviors of classroom teachers have all limited fulfillment of these mandates and have placed certain groups of students at increased risk of low achievement, failure, and dropping out of school. Exacerbating the limited success of these federal, state, and local laws and practices has been the rapid transformation in student populations and the growing generational and cultural dissonance between teachers and students.

B. Demographic Changes

Demographic patterns within the United States and concurrently within public schools have changed dramatically during the past decade and will continue to do so into the 21st century. The *Washington Post* describes "the extraordinary racial and ethnic changes that are transforming both U.S. coasts and pushing across the Hinterland," where minority populations now constitute a majority of the population in 186 counties in the U.S. (1991, p. 1). Using data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the *Post* indicates the rate at which individual ethnic groups are growing (see Figure 1, p. 6). These population shifts, combined with our weakened economy, have definite implications for educational planners. Sociometric projections indicate that during the next century, schools, particularly those in urban areas, will be serving a new majority of students who will be poor and from racial minority families. Student populations will soon include one in four children from families living below the poverty line, 12–15% who will have emigrated from other countries and not be English speaking, and a number of children (25%$^{+}$) who will be living with a single parent (Grant, 1988).

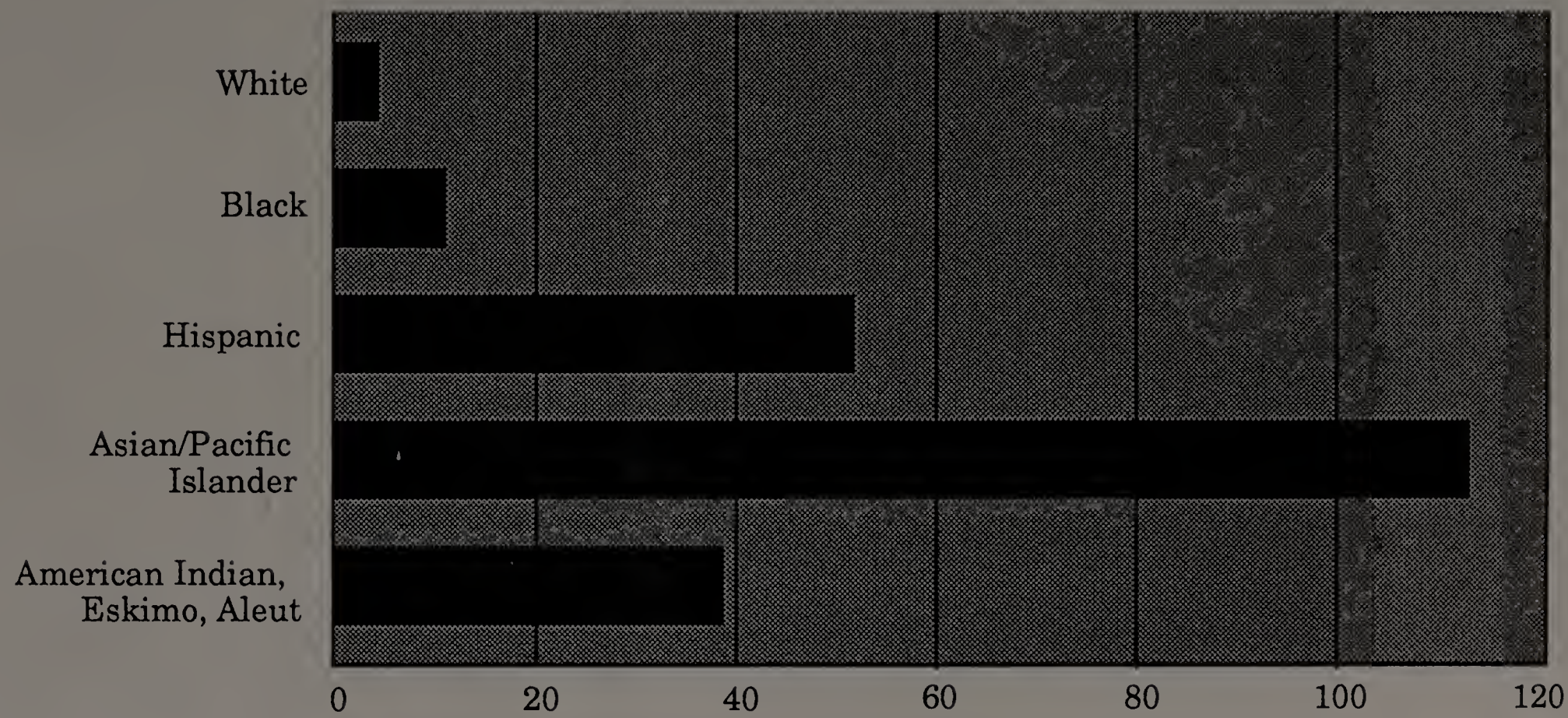

Fig. 1 Increases in Population from 1980 to 1990 Census

NOTE: The chart above shows Hispanics as a separate population category. The figures for whites, blacks, Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts are for non-Hispanic members of those groups.

SOURCE: Bureau of the Census

The importance of demographic changes in schools is underscored in the recently completed study by the American Association of University Women (1992) which recommends careful examination of population shifts. Further, the study suggests that as student populations become more diverse, greater attention must be placed on including all students in the design of surveys and in the study of student achievement.

A news article in 1987 cast some dire predictions and stereotyping attitudes about certain children entering kindergarten that year:

> ...[N]ot only is the class of 2000 smaller than many of its predecessors, reflecting the low birthrates of recent years, but it could easily turn out to be less prepared for college or the workplace. That is because the generation now in kindergarten, more than any before it, is dominated by children whose circumstances — poverty, an unstable home, a non-English-speaking background or membership in a minority group that historically has performed below average academically — make them statistically more likely to fail in school. (*Washington Post,* 1987, p. 5)

These demographic changes are apparent in urban and suburban school systems throughout Massachusetts. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, public school population shifts have been monitored since 1980 as increasing numbers of children who are financially disadvantaged and culturally different have entered the school system (see Appendix B). In 1980, the minority enrollment in Cambridge represented 30% of all students while the percentage of children in special education was 21%. By 1990, student enrollment had changed to include a minority population of 50.1% and a special needs population of 24.7% (*General Information Fact Sheet,* 1990).

C. Overrepresentation of Minorities in Special Education

National statistics corroborate trends in Massachusetts as ethnic and racial minority students, particularly Black, Hispanic, and Native Americans

who are likely to be poorer than other groups, have been overrepresented in special education. Conversely, Asians and whites are overrepresented in talented and gifted programs. In a survey conducted in 1986–87 by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, the disproportionate identification of black students in certain special education categories — educable mentally retarded, severely emotionally disturbed, and trainable mentally retarded — was most pronounced. However, Native Americans and Hispanics were also overidentified in special education in states where those minority populations were large (see Table 1, p. 9).

Unfortunately, however, as school populations have been altered and changed, educational structures, policies, and procedures have remained essentially unchanged. Indeed, it appears that as school and community demographics have shifted, the responses of the majority, as represented by intransigent public institutions in general and negative teacher attitudes in particular, have exacerbated the serious problems of discrimination, inequality, and bias toward students from diverse groups.

However, as a result of the work of advocacy groups backed by some political and professional organizations, federal and state laws have been enacted to protect the rights of students with special needs or educational differences to participate in integrated, non-categorical programs within the Least Restrictive Environment (L.R.E.) or regular education classroom. In addition, recent educational research and study advocate the inclusion of diverse groups of students in the mainstream and recommend varied teaching approaches and strategies such as heterogeneous grouping, cooperative learning, and cross-graded and student-directed learning, which allow schools to accommodate the needs of a broad range of learners. However, with continuing reductions in resources and the inability or

Table 1 Percentage of Students in Disability Categories by Race

Enrollment (Nationally)	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
All States	1	3	10	16	70
By Category:					
Talented & Gifted (TAG)	0	5	5	8	81
Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR)	0	1	5	35	58
Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR)	0	2	10	27	60
Speech Impaired (SPEECH)	0	2	8	16	73
Severely Emotionally Disturbed (SED)	0	0	7	27	65
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	0	1	10	17	71

Enrollment (Alaska)	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
All Districts	25	3	2	4	66
By Category:					
TAG	15	4	0	2	79
EMR	44	3	2	4	47
TMR	35	2	0	0	63
SPEECH	33	2	1	5	59
SED	26	1	1	7	65
SLD	38	1	1	7	53

Enrollment (California)	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
All Districts	1	9	27	9	54
By Category:					
TAG	0	15	12	5	68
EMR	1	4	35	19	41
TMR	0	8	32	15	45
SPEECH	0	6	27	9	57
SED	0	3	16	18	63
SLD	1	3	28	13	56

Enrollment (New Jersey)	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
All Districts	0	3	11	17	69
By Category:					
TAG	0	5	4	10	80
EMR	0	1	14	39	46
TMR	0	3	14	29	55
SPEECH	0	3	12	14	72
SED	0	0	10	30	59
SLD	0	1	10	19	71

Source: Adapted from U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (1987)

unwillingness of personnel to adjust to the diverse needs of individual students, these practices have not been broadly implemented, further inhibiting the needed restructuring of existing service delivery systems (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1991b). As a result, the narrowly organized, teacher-directed mainstream still predominates.

This structure has operated for several decades and is reinforced by the increasing tendency of classroom teachers to provide gender and culturally biased instruction for all students while referring low-achieving, often disengaged students out of the classroom for instructional support or remediation. Nationally, approximately 11% of the overall public school enrollment is identified as having special needs and is served by special education (Gartner, 1989). As stated previously, Massachusetts' averages are much higher (17.4% statewide), with suburban school districts (Lexington) identifying 16% of its students and urban school districts (Cambridge, Boston, Worcester) identifying 23–25% of their students (State Auditor's Report, 1991).

Commonly, classroom teachers identify certain students as "high risk" or "low achieving" and make referrals to other teachers (specialists, tutors) who provide specialized instruction which supplements or supplants classroom instruction. Thus, students perceived as being at risk of low achievement are categorized, often removed from regular classroom activities, and frequently provided curricular experiences separate and different from their chronological peers. In Cambridge, for example, approximately 44% of the total student body receives instructional support or alternative services outside of mainstream classrooms (Bisbicos, 1990). In Boston the figure is 72% (Perone, 1989). Unfortunately, these numbers suggest that despite school reform movements and rhetoric about equal opportunities for all,

many schools operate two distinct systems — one for normal students (achievers) and another for students who deviate from the norm (low achievers) and who increasingly tend to be poor, minority, handicapped, limited-English-speaking and male. As an example, in Cambridge, Massachusetts public schools, the total population of minority students is 50.1%; yet, assigned to its special education self-contained classes (those most restrictive, i.e., furthest from the mainstream) is a population of students most of whom (80%) come from linguistic and racial minority groups, with boys outnumbering girls four to one. Similarly, Cambridge's Rindge School of Technical Arts (RSTA) has an almost entirely male, predominantly low socioeconomic population of students, many of whom are from linguistic and ethnic minority groups. Additionally, more than 75% of RSTA students receive special education, Chapter I, or remedial reading services (Bisbicos, 1990).

Historically, "special" learners have been identified for alternative, non-regular classroom placements or have left school. Statewide statistics indicate that over 14,350 students of the total number of students enrolled in grades 9–12 left public schools prior to graduation of the Commonwealth's public schools in 1986–87. This number is equivalent to losing almost the entire student body from 10 of the state's largest school systems. If current trends continue, it is projected that 13,400 or 19.5% of the students who began grade 9 in 1988 will not complete high school. The dropout rates for minority students will be considerably higher — a projected 36% of Black students, 48% of Hispanic students, 32% of Native American students, and 23% of Asian students will drop out of high school prior to completion. Although the rate for white students was proportionately below the state average in 1986–87, nearly 75%, or 10,350, of the total number of school

dropouts were white. Two thirds of the dropouts attended schools in urban districts, which at a 31% projected four-year dropout rate, was one and one-half times the state average (*Systematic School Change,* 1988). These figures do not even consider the large numbers of students who are proceeding through school yet are disengaged from the learning process. While dropout rates may never be eliminated, clearly solutions must be found to address increasing numbers and types of children at risk of failure in school.

The often-praised American Association of University Women's (AAUW) report, *How Schools Shortchange Girls,* uses the National Coalition of Advocates for Students' (NCAS) definition of students at risk:

> Who are the children at risk? They include a large proportion of young people from poor families of all races. They include minority and immigrant children who face discriminatory policies and practices, large numbers of girls and young women who miss out on educational opportunities routinely afforded males, and children with special needs who are unserved, underserved, or improperly categorized because of handicap or learning difficulties. (1992, p. 8)

In addition to learning more about high-risk populations of students, researchers are measuring the prevalent factors or variables which contribute to school failure.

As suggested, risk factors for dropping out appear in schools across the state, particularly in urban areas. Variables such as low achievement, retention in grade, behavior problems, poor attendance, low socioeconomic status are all high-risk indicators and can be used predictably as early as grade 3 to determine which students will drop out of school and which will stay to complete their education. A practical criterion then for identifying students at risk of dropping out of school is placement or eligibility for Chapter I, special education, or other remedial services under today's standards (Slavin & Madden, 1989). However, the two commonly used

strategies, giving students failing grades and referring them for remedial, compensatory services, have largely proven ineffective at producing lasting gains in achievement or in keeping students motivated to finish their schooling.

The efficacy of the existing service delivery in special education has been questioned extensively by researchers as drop-out rates and the length of time students remain in special education have increased, while proof of improved student outcomes and performance have decreased. Jim Cummins from the Ontario (Canada) Institute for Studies in Education decries the intransigence of special education placements by stating that "there is little evidence for the overall effectiveness in special education in view of the fact that very few children return to the mainstream from special education placements" (Harry, 1992, p. viii). In fact, between 1974–1990, only 5% of the children enrolled in special education programs in Massachusetts schools returned to regular education classrooms each year. However, the number of children identified during the same period and placed in special education programs for 25–60% of each day increased by 400% (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1991a). Since the initiator of these out-of-classroom placements is most often the classroom teacher, it is important to examine specific variables such as teacher expectations, attitudes, and perceptions which can lead to this low achievement → referral → stigmatization → separation → low-achievement syndrome for certain students.

D. Maturing of the Teaching Force

General assumptions then can be made about the failure rates within mainstream classrooms in urban school systems by looking at the teaching

population, which has changed little in the past 30 years, and by comparing it with the constantly changing, increasingly diversified student body in public schools today. An immediate sense of culture clash emerges.

Nationally, the teaching force is made up of mid- to late-career veterans whose average age is 50. Many of these individuals have taught at only one or two schools throughout their professional lives and have become victims of the disenchantment and demotivation typical of mid-career professionals. At this stage of career development, it is not unusual for individual performance and energy to level off as the focus of attention moves from professional to personal roles (Evans, 1989). While age is not necessarily a determinant, the period during which an individual formed his/her perceptions of the world, gained informal and formal education, and adopted lifelong values could be significant in influencing that individual's personal and professional interpersonal relationships, expectations and attitudes. Many of today's teaching staff spent their formative years in America during the 1940s and 1950s during an optimistic post-WWII period.

Conditions in families, schools, government, and the economy were considerably more stable, more predictable, and less fluid than today. Many nuclear families were intact, while gender roles were established separately and rarely unquestioned publicly. Authority figures represented by government and schools were respected and followed. Student populations in classrooms were more similar than dissimilar and generally adhered to a single curriculum standard for all. Limited-English-speaking students were either retained in grades because of low achievement or forced to improve their English. Few handicapped or special needs students ever saw the mainstream. In fact, children thought to be deviant (i.e., less than normal in intelligence or of inferior genetic make up) were tested, categorized by

disability, and placed in segregated schools or living environments, commonly as a result of fear, subjective analysis, or biased test results. The spirit of the period held that similarity and conformity were essential components of the ideal, while diversity and differences were undesirable conditions to be changed or hidden.

Many teachers of this generation were spectators to, not participants in, the social movements of the 1960s that dramatically affected equity issues for African Americans and other ethnic/racial minorities, the poor, and women. As a result, many of today's teachers do not relate directly to the needs of a diverse student body and rely on curriculum norms and activities suited to more homogeneous groups. Developmental curricula based on student needs, learning styles, and prior knowledge or learning are not widely used. In fact, the AAUW report (1992) warns about curriculum omissions which limit comprehensive and meaningful instruction for students about many vital topics that carry life-long consequences. The report describes the "evaded curriculum," which deprives students of meaningful learning experiences on sensitive and discomforting topics ranging from sexuality, eating disorders, teenage pregnancy, AIDS, and substance abuse to suicide.

E. Study Hypotheses

The generational and cultural gaps between these teachers and today's students are extensive and contribute significantly to failure in school. While the world has experienced unparalleled technological, social, and political changes and growth during the past 30 years, many schools and classrooms have changed very little and continue to model practices appropriate for past generations. Teachers trained and conditioned during the eras of Sputnik,

the "Red" scare, and the Cold War are struggling to educate students who are more representative of the global society and have moved on to Hubble and Perestroika. Changing conditions in the world and changing demographics in schools have combined with the biased attitudes of many teachers to produce classroom environments which are unwelcoming and even hostile to children with differences. In many schools, students with differences are those children whose traits and conditions of life — minority group status, bilingualism, special learning needs, low socioeconomic attainment, or physical or emotional handicap — are unlike those of a majority of today's classroom teachers. Unfortunately, this dissonance has led to the lowered expectations and discriminatory behaviors of many teachers and has resulted in the mistrust, disengagement, and failure of increasing numbers of students.

This study focuses on the factors in student behaviors and characteristics which clash with teacher characteristics, values, and attitudes. An examination of this important student/teacher independent relationship is based on the following hypotheses, that:

1. cultural, racial, and gender bias in teachers have direct and important bearings on which children succeed or fail in school;

2. students who fail and/or are referred to special education often differ from their teachers in race, social class, economic level, and gender;

3. mid-career teachers, those with 20 or more years of experience, show more negative stereotyping and differentiated expectations for students than teachers with 19 or fewer years of teaching experience.

The following chapter examines some of the research conducted during the past 20 years on the variables affecting the phenomena of teacher expectancy and differentiated behaviors towards students.

CHAPTER II

TWENTY YEARS OF STUDY OF THE TEACHER EXPECTANCY PHENOMENON: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Since the influential early studies of Rosenthal and Jacobson in 1968; Clairborn, 1969; Greiger and Sanverdra, 1972; and Rosenthal, 1974, teacher expectancy has continued to be an important research topic. During the past two decades, educational researchers have studied and documented the fact that students perceived to be high or low achievers interact differently with teachers (Brophy & Good, 1974; Rosenthal, 1974). These interactions differ because teachers communicate different performance expectations for students based on beliefs about what students need and predictions about how students will respond if treated in particular ways. There are numerous ways in which teacher beliefs other than expectations for student performance may affect student performance. Teacher beliefs about classroom management, curriculum implementation, male versus female behaviors, and many other non-performance issues could seriously affect teacher behavior and expectations.

Researchers Good and Cooper (1983) have examined two types of teacher expectation effect. One, the self-fulfilling prophecy effect, occurs when an erroneous expectation leads to behaviors which cause the expectation to be realized. The second, sustaining expectation effects, on the other hand, occur when teachers expect students to continue previously developed behavior patterns (Good, 1987).

In the 1960s, Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson's *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (1986) set the tone for the study of and controversy about self-

fulfilling prophecy. In their research, they manipulated teacher expectations about student achievement (by using inflated test scores) to see if the expectations would be fulfilled. Their results indicated that primary grade students performed at a higher level because of their teachers' artificially high expectations. Although replication of this study was attempted by Clairborn in 1969 and criticized by Snow in 1969 and Taylor in 1970, its merits lie in the stimulus it provided to subsequent investigators who tended to concur that teachers' expectations can and do affect teacher-student relationships and student achievement. Interestingly, this body of research has also revealed other dimensions not explored by Rosenthal. One example is that student behavior and expectations can influence teacher behavior. In addition, other studies show that teacher expectations/predictions tend to be accurate and are not necessarily inappropriate. Sometimes, teachers' expectations are unclear and, as a result, can change throughout an academic year.

In 1970, Brophy and Good attempted to explain the expectation communication process in a number of steps or stages:

1. Teacher forms differential expectations for students' behavior and achievements early in the school year.

2. Following these expectations, teachers behave differently toward various students.

3. Students interpret this behavior as a guide for their performance.

4. When teacher behavior is consistent over time, students' self-concepts, motivation, conduct, interactions, and aspirations are affected.

5. The effects on students will complement and reinforce teacher expectations as students conform to these expectations.

6. High-expectation students will achieve at or near ability, whereas low-expectation students will not gain as much as they might have in a different environment.

The theory behind this communication model is that all steps must be followed in order for self-fulfilling prophecy effects to occur. Often, however, all stages do not happen. Thus, not all expectations are self-fulfilling. Additionally, self-fulfilling prophecy effects are more likely to occur when students are new to the teacher (beginning of the school year or kindergarten children, first graders, junior high schoolers, or high schoolers) (Good, 1987). However, self-fulfillment (based on incorrect or unjustified information) can be mitigated when more accurate information becomes available to the teacher. Thus, information received or perceived by teachers has a direct effect on teacher expectations and ultimately on the self-fulfilling effects of the effect of those expectations.

Pre-performance information (data obtained before any direct contact) can significantly affect teacher expectations for student performance. Information about students' past history in special education can be detrimental if the child had been labeled mentally retarded or disturbed. However, initial biasing effects can be overcome if the students' performance in the new situation is inconsistent and exceeds information conveyed by the label. Additionally, past performance as indicated on cumulative folders seems to be a much more realistic determinant of teacher expectations than labels. Interestingly, the success of low-aptitude or retarded children is typically attributed to some variable factor such as effort or luck. However, the success of a non-labeled child often goes to high ability. Thus, the notion that beliefs seriously affect teacher expectations and behavior is reinforced (Rolison & Medway, 1985).

Additional studies have shown that teacher expectations can be directly affected by other student characteristics such as socioeconomic status, physical appearance, behavior or temperament, ethnicity, sex, and speech patterns (Good, 1987). Adams and Cohen (1974) found that teacher interactions were influenced by physical characteristics of students as they attempted to investigate the earlier hypothesis of Adams and LaVoie about the categorization of children's physical characteristics (sex, behavior, attractiveness, physique, ability, race, social class, and hygiene). The researchers divided these characteristics into two categories, physical factors and interpersonal factors, which would directly influence teacher expectations. Adams and Cohen found that physical characteristics (facial attractiveness and personal appearance) tended to have greater influence than interpersonal characteristics, especially during the first week of the school year.

In studying the effects of student and teacher ethnicity on referrals of students to special education services, Tobias, Cole, Zibrin, and Bodlakova (1982) found no significant difference in referral recommendations. However, a trend emerged suggesting that teachers tended to refer children less frequently when they shared the same ethnic background as the teacher.

Negative stereotyping towards exceptional children by teachers has been found to be an important obstacle to successful mainstreaming. Similarly, the negative images held by teachers are implicated in differential expectations for other students (Burden & Parish, 1983). Certain studies (Safran & Safran, 1984; Pullis & Cadwell, 1982) show strong and consistent relationships between student temperament and behavioral characteristics and teachers' classroom decisions. Teachers show less tolerance and lowered expectations for children with certain "acting out" behaviors because they

anticipate the student's lack of behavior improvement in regular classrooms. Safran and Safran (1984) further suggest that teachers may interpret these behaviors as interfering with group process and undermining personal control and professional competence. Temperamental matching between teacher and student has been tested by Lerner, Lerner, and Zabski (1985), who have developed a "Goodness of Fit" model. They describe children whose attributes of individuality promote differential reactions in their socializing with others. Those students whose temperament best fitted the demands of their peers enjoyed more positive peer relationships than others whose behavioral styles did not match peers. Similarly, students whose temperaments best fitted with teacher demands had better grade-point averages and teacher ratings than children whose fit was poor. Also, fit in one context could be used to predict fit in another context.

Another important physical variable, sex, had also been studied and researched. In a comparison of the behaviors of male and female teachers toward male and female students, Good, Sikes, and Brophy (1973) found that male and female teachers showed similar patterns of behavior with both male and female students. Boys and girls differ in schools as indicated by studies showing boys to be more aggressive, difficult to manage, and performing at a lower level in the elementary school years. Whether to discourage natural male aggressiveness or because of a need for control, teachers show disapproval more often to boys than girls (Brophy & Good, 1970) and are more likely to use harsh, angry tones when criticizing boys (Spaulding, 1963; Waetjen, 1962). Some researchers have called for a balance of male and female teachers in schools because of the undesirable treatment of male students by female teachers. However, little empirical data exists suggesting discrimination on the part of female teachers. In fact, both male and female

teachers act similarly towards students — giving the most time, praise, and positive feedback to high-achieving male students and giving the most negative criticism to low-achieving males. Comparisons of student sex differences showed that boys were more active and interacted more frequently with teachers. Boys were asked more process questions, while girls were asked product or choice questions. While boys received the most contacts with teachers (both negative and positive), the contact with girls was proportionately more positive. Also, low-achieving girls had a relatively poor pattern of teacher contact but not as poor as that of low-achieving boys (Good, Sikes, & Brophy, 1973).

While acknowledging the numerous personal, physical, and academic variables which affect teacher expectations, researchers have documented the ways that teachers behave towards students who differ in current or expected achievement. Different treatment for high- and low-achieving students have been summarized (Good, 1987):

1. Waiting less time for low-achieving students to answer questions (Researchers: Allington, 1980; Bazik, 1974; Taylor, 1979).

2. Giving low achievers answers instead of waiting or trying to coach students into giving more appropriate answers (Researchers: Brophy & Good, 1970; Jeter & Davis, 1973).

3. Rewarding inappropriate behaviors or incorrect answers of low-achieving students (Researchers: Amato, 1975; Graham, 1984; Kleinfeld, 1975; Natriello & Dornbusch, 1984; Rowe, 1974).

4. Criticizing low achievers more often for failure (Researchers: Brophy & Good, 1970; Cooper & Baron, 1977; Good, Sikes, & Brophy, 1973; Smith & Luginbuhl, 1976).

5. Praising low achievers less often than high achievers (Researchers: Babad, Inbar, & Rosenthal, 1982; Brophy & Good, 1970; Cooper & Baron, 1977).

6. Failing to give feedback to oral answers given by low achievers (Researchers: Brophy & Good, 1970; Good et al., 1973; Jeter & Davis, 1973; Willis, 1970).

7. Interacting less frequently with low achievers (Researchers: Adams & Cohen, 1974; Balkey, 1970; Given, 1974; Kester & Letchworth, 1972).

8. Calling on low achievers to answer less often (Researchers: Davis & Levine, 1970; Mendoza, Good, & Brophy, 1972; Rubovitz & Maehr, 1971).

9. Seating low achievers farther away from the teacher (Researcher: Rist, 1970).

10. Demanding less from low achievers (Researchers: Beez, 1968; Graham, 1984).

11. Asking low achievers easier, non-analytic questions (Researchers: Martinek & Johnson, 1979).

12. Interacting with low achievers more privately than publicly and monitoring and structuring their activities more closely (Researchers: Brophy & Good, 1974).

13. Grading tests or assignments in a differential manner whereby high, not low, achievers were given the benefit of the doubt in borderline cases (Researchers: Cahen, 1966; Finn, 1972; Heapy & Siess, 1970).

14. Providing less frequent and less friendly non-verbal communicators of success to low achievers (Researchers: Babad et al., 1982; Chaikin, Siglet, & Derlega, 1974; Kester & Letchworth, 1972).

15. Providing briefer and less informative feedback to questions of low achievers (Researchers: Cooper, 1979; Cornbleth, Davis, & Button, 1972).

16. Providing less eye contact and other indicators of attentiveness (forward leaning, head nodding) to low achievers (Researchers: Chailin, Sigler, & Derlega, 1974).

17. Using less effective but time-consuming instructional methods with low achievers when time is limited (Researchers: Swann & Synder, 1980).

18. Evidencing less use and acceptance of low achiever's ideas (Researchers: Martiner & Johnson, 1979; Martiner & Karpet, 1982).

These differentiated treatments are perceived by students and affect their interactions with teachers. Research conducted by Weinstein et al. (1987) indicates student awareness of differences in teacher behavior towards different students in the same class. Students perceive teachers holding higher expectations for high achievers who are given more opportunities and choice. At the same time, students perceive teachers structuring the activities of low achievers more closely and providing them with more help and more negative feedback. In this study, younger children were found to be less accurate than fifth graders in predicting teacher expectations and in reporting differential patterns in their own interactions with the teachers. Fifth graders appeared more likely than younger children to mirror teacher experiences in their self-descriptions. This pattern of findings is consistent with the results of other studies which demonstrate greater understanding of the behavior of others and more realistic (in line with the teacher's) judgments about ability with the increasing age of students. Weinstein's study underscores the power of expectancy processes in the classroom and the important role in the schooling environment can play in the development of children's expectations for learning, even as early as grade one.

Good (1987) reviewed additional studies on student's attributional thinking about the reasons for their successes or failures. Low-achieving

students are found to attribute their failures to lack of ability rather than to insufficient effort or inappropriate teaching. Dweck and Elliot in 1983, Eccles and Wigfield in 1985, and Graham in 1984 agree that low-achieving students' attributional thinking can fall into a failure syndrome/learned helplessness pattern whereby students blame themselves for low achievement. These feelings are reinforced when teachers minimize demands on low achievers, overreact to minor successes or respond to failure with excessive pity or sympathy instead of problem identification and remedial instruction (Blumenfeld et al., 1973).

Differentiated treatments of low- and high-achieving students do not necessarily indicate inappropriate methodologies or ineffective teaching. However, some teachers overreact to relatively small differences among students by inappropriately teaching them in divergent, sometimes polarized ways. Of significance is the appropriateness of students' differential treatment (Good, 1987).

Good continues this review with discussion of similar behavioral research conducted by Rosenthal in 1974. Rosenthal, focusing on positive self-fulfilling effects, indicated that teachers can increase student achievement. Methods he suggested include: creating warm relationships with students, giving students more feedback about their performance, teaching students more and more difficult material, and giving students more opportunities to respond.

More recent research affirms the need for warmth, combined with specific on-task orientation, as a major teaching variable for enhancing student performance. One study indicated that warmth in and of itself is not necessarily beneficial and may actually detract from student performance. In this study, analysis of students' cognitive performance and academic self-

concept revealed that better student outcomes were related to such variables as non-verbal warmth, explanation, task orientation, praising, and uninterrupted (for feedback) lessons. Student outcomes were negatively related to off-task teaching behavior and negative feedback (Harris, Rosenthal, & Snodgrass, 1986).

Some of the differential treatments of high/low achievers discussed previously and researched by Graham, those of demanding less quality or even incorrect responses, could also suggest the interference of gratuitousness on the part of teachers. By using excessive sympathy and unsolicited help, teachers could communicate low expectations, especially when these behaviors occur instead of behaviors designed to help low-achieving students meet success.

In a study of low-income black children who had moved with their families from Chicago into middle-income white suburbs, researchers identified that differentiated standards were held for desegregation students. Curriculum expectations, grading, and placement procedures were higher in the suburban schools than those in city schools, leading to some ambiguous findings. Integrated students were placed in special education and low-ability groupings at much higher rates in suburban schools than in the urban schools. Researchers suggested that while these suburban schools and teachers responded to students with increased educational assistance, it was mixed with some racial and socioeconomic discrimination. However, another finding reported by parents was that students' performance improved in the new, more rigorous/challenging settings, and student grades and school satisfaction did not decline (Rosenbaum, Kulieke, & Rubinowitz, 1988).

Tracking underachievers into remedial or watered-down courses has some researchers convinced that school practices designed to assist and

support these students may in fact be hindering their intellectual development and exacerbating school failure. Students at risk, they say, are more likely to flourish in enriched curriculum typically reserved for able students. In the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) newsletter (1989) featuring new programs for underachievers, reviewers decry the bias in schools which restrict access of poor, racial minority students to vigorous academic work. At-risk students are more often given lessons shaped by a behavioral or training perspective: lower-level skills, fragmented knowledge or easily tested facts. The several improvement programs reviewed shared the common themes of high expectations and a belief that at-risk students can succeed in an enriched environment (ASCD, 1989).

Similarly, case studies of effective alternative programs for marginal or low-achieving students (many of whom are of color) show that such students respond positively to schooling which combines a caring relationship and personalized teaching with a high degree of program structure characterized by clear, demanding, but attainable goals (Grant, 1988). Characteristics of effective schools in general are similar: a safe and orderly environment, clear goals, good instructional leadership, high expectations, time to learn, frequent monitoring of student progress, and good school-home relationships (Fiske, 1984).

Most classroom behavior is ambiguous and subject to multiple interpretations. As Good and Weinstein (1986) note, teachers express expectations in so many ways that it is not possible to suggest a single combination of behaviors that lead to the communication of appropriate expectations. It is the quality of style of the behavior as well as student's

interpretations of teacher behavior which are the most important factors that determine the effects of particular behaviors on students (Good, 1987).

The field study described in chapter 3 focuses on the factors in student behavioral and personal characteristics which clash with teacher values and attitudes and which lead to lowered expectations, differentiated treatment, and failure or low achievement. Research findings support the directions of this study by indicating:

- that teachers maintain high expectations for students they perceive to be intelligent, competent in English, middle class, and high achieving males;
- that students for whom teachers have high expectations tend to fulfill those expectations;
- that teachers hold lower expectations for students with handicaps, low socioeconomic status, bilingualism, or who are female or are males with poor achievement;
- that teaching practices in the 1990s still greatly reflect criteria and student characteristics common to the 1950s and 1960s;
- that mid-career professionals are in need of non -traditional approaches to revitalization and training.

CHAPTER III

FIELD STUDY IN CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

A. The Community

A field study was initiated within the Cambridge School Department in 1989 in order to reinforce research findings and to directly examine factors affecting differentiated expectations for and bias toward some low-achieving students. The researcher, having worked within the Cambridge School Department for 16 years as Coordinator of Special Education, conducted this study to examine teacher perceptions of student failure in two of its elementary schools.

Cambridge is a cross-cultural community, adjacent to Boston, of more than 95,000 residents. During most of its 350-year history, the city has enjoyed the positive and harmonious intersection of diverse cultural, ethnic, racial, linguistic, economic, and industrial groups and activities. Its multicultural population includes many first- and second-generation Americans who have emigrated from more than 64 foreign countries (*Cambridge Schools at a Glance,* 1990).

During the nineteenth century, the city had three sections — Old Cambridge, East Cambridge, and Cambridgeport — all deeply divided between immigrant populations and old Cantabridgians (*Student Handbook,* 1990). Thereafter, many more Cambridge neighborhoods developed under the influences of specific immigrant groups and reflected the cultural, linguistic, and economic values of those groups. Presently, there are individual neighborhoods dominated by Portuguese, Hispanic, Asian, Greek, Italian, Irish, Haitian, and African American citizens as well as the old

Cambridge "Brahmin" section known as Brattle Street. Interestingly, despite its image as a college town, housing Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Cambridge, Lesley, and Radcliffe Colleges, Cambridge is identified in state census documents as a blue-collar community. These working-class, multi-ethnic people represent the majority of Cambridge citizens who send their children to the city's public schools.

B. The School System

The Cambridge School Department provides education for more than 7,500 students in 13 elementary schools (grades K–8) and one comprehensive high school (grades 9–12), Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS). With an annual school department budget of more than $71 million, Cambridge stands out as a well-financed and well-supported school system. Its annual $6,500 per pupil expenditure rate is the second highest in the state of Massachusetts, and in a recent issue of *Boston Magazine* (May 1992), the school system and city were assigned +5 points (on a scale of -5 to +5) for their commitment to education. This designation was awarded on the basis of a combination of high per pupil expenditure, plentiful resources available to the schools, and the comprehensiveness of programs and services. Cambridge is an urban school system unique for its success in meeting the needs of diverse and typical learners. The school department's programs and services are as diversified as its citizenry.

In addition to the standard curriculum provided in its 13 elementary schools, this city school system offers 10 alternative and innovative programs ranging from open education classrooms, computer magnet studies, gifted and talented programs to home-based early childhood service for elementary students and parents. The high school (CRLS) is organized into six houses or

administrative units and, similar to the elementary level, offers many alternative programs and services to address the diverse needs of its students through advanced placement courses, community-based learning programs, technical vocational education, an adolescent parenting program, and a state-of-the-art teen health care center. In addition, all schools offer extensive special education and transitional bilingual education services for the more than 2,500 students identified as needing them.

Since 1979, the Cambridge schools have been desegregated under a voluntary desegregation plan developed through a coordinated planning effort involving community agents, school personnel, and parents. Its "Controlled Choice Plan" has served as a model for desegregating schools throughout the state of Massachusetts and in several other parts of the country (Student Assignment and Elementary Application Information, 1990).

C. Target Schools

Two elementary schools identified as typical Cambridge schools were selected for closer examination of student referral and placement in special education patterns and their relation to teacher expectations. These schools (School A and School B) were selected both because of their similarities and because of their differences.

Each school offers standard, traditional curricula experiences for students from kindergarten to grade 8. Both schools also provide magnet, bilingual, and special needs classrooms. One school also offers an Intensive Studies Program (i.e., gifted and talented). Under the Controlled Choice Plan, middle-class and working-class parents often give high preference to these schools because of the schools' perceived superiority in program options

and resources to other elementary schools in Cambridge. Each year a waiting list of students has to be developed by the city's desegregation office because the number of parents requesting placements at these schools exceeds the number of available slots. Yet even under the city's model desegregation plan, racial balance in both schools is maintained in an unusual, not well-integrated fashion. The enrollment in both schools is almost evenly divided between majority and minority students (see Table 2, p. 33). However, most white students are enrolled in the standard curriculum or Intensive Studies Program, while most of the minority students (Latino in School A and Haitian in School B) are enrolled in the transitional bilingual education classes, which provide separate classrooms, teachers, curriculum, policies, and procedures for students in those programs (*Transitional Bilingual Education Report,* 1989). The challenge within these schools for the past 10 years has been to improve the blending and collaboration between students and teachers in the standard curriculum programs with those in the bilingual programs.

Through the mechanisms of pupil study teams and student support teams, regular and special education teachers and professionals from community agencies (Department of Social Services, Juvenile Court, Cambridge Hospital as well as Cambridge Family and Children's Services) meet weekly at each school to monitor and discuss children at risk and, as appropriate, provide resources to those children and families identified. These teams initiate most of the referrals of children to special education in each building. Interestingly, a review of pupil study team forms, which document team findings and recommendations, indicates that teachers in both schools cited similar reasons for the referral of children for special education services. Poor achievement, low motivation, inability to follow

Table 2 Student/Teacher Data: Target Schools, Cambridge, Massachusetts

School	Programs	Teachers				Students					
		Total #	Males	Females	Minority	Total #	Males	Females	Minority	Sp. Ed.	% Sp. Ed.
A	• Standard Curriculum (K–8) • Spanish Bilingual (K–8) • Intensive Studies	26	3 (12%)	23 (88%)	3 (11.5%)	504	267 (53%)	237 (47%)	258 (51%)	85	16.87
B	• Standard Curriculum (K–8) • Haitian/Creole Bilingual (K–8)	19	5 (26%)	14 (74%)	3 (16%)	394	208 (53%)	186 (47%)	197 (51%)	127	32.23

Sources: Student Prototype Report by School, Bureau of Pupil Services, Cambridge School Department (February, 1991); General Information Fact Sheet, Cambridge School Department (January, 1990)

directions, distractibility, truancy, and inability to work independently were the problem behaviors most often cited.

School philosophy statements for both schools reflect student-centered, though not always gender sensitive, values and goals and imply developmentally appropriate expectations for students. School A's philosophy speaks to a sacred trust which motivates staff to "strive to help each child to learn and grow personally, socially, and academically...[to] nurture a love and respect for learning...and [to] put each child in touch with his own dignity and self-worth" (*Student Assignment and Elementary Application Information,* 1990, p. 11). School B's statement emphasizes the ethnic, racial, and social mixture of students which reflects "our belief that this is the best starting point for learning, a nice variety of students who are allowed to interact and whose backgrounds are seen as positive and the basis for our curriculum" (p. 13).

However, despite similarities in philosophies, program offerings, and student groupings within both schools, the rates of failure, as indicated by the numbers of children placed in special education, are markedly different. During the 1990–91 school year, the citywide incidence of special education was 24.7% of the total student body (*General Information Fact Sheet,* 1990). Yet at 16.87%, the rate of referrals to special education in School A was the lowest in the school system. By contrast, the rate of referral in School B was 32.23%, representing the largest special education incidence of any elementary school in the city (*Student Prototype Report by School,* 1991).

Although a host of factors and forces could be interacting in the identification and placement of these at-risk children, classroom teachers in both schools have been singled out for study because of the vital roles teacher preferences, biases, and expectations play in student achievement and

failure. This study of teacher preference variables has been conducted so as to determine their influence on the rates of referrals to special education in School A and School B and to determine the reasons why the referral rates are so disparate in the two schools.

D. Method

1. Subjects

A total of 24 teachers (12 each from Schools A and B) were randomly selected from among teachers at all grade levels — K–8. Teachers ranged in age from 29–55 (mean = 40.2 years of age) and had from 3 to 29 years of experience in the profession (mean = 19.2 years of experience). Eighteen female and six male teachers participated. In general, classrooms consisted of 25 students and one teacher. All 24 teachers in this sample completed a "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire" that required a variety of fill-in, multiple-choice and scale-ranked answers to questions about their training and experience as professional educators as well as their experiences with educationally different learners. So as to examine validity and reliability of this survey instrument, the "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire" was pilot tested in 1989 with a group of five teachers randomly selected from another Cambridge elementary school with characteristics common to those in the target schools.

2. Limitations of the Study

Teachers involved in the study were selected randomly from central staff lists maintained by the school department. Every third name on the list for each school was identified for inclusion. However, the count had to be adjusted (i.e., repeated) so that teachers from each grade level were

represented; thus, tallies include information from teachers at all grade levels, with some grades duplicated because there were 12 teacher-respondents from each school.

Participants involved in follow-up interviews were volunteers from among the 24 teachers who completed the "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire." Thus, selection of interviewees was neither random nor by grade level, with the majority (3 out of 6) representing teachers of Grades 6–8.

3. Student Descriptors

A total of 30 descriptive characteristics to be rated by classroom teachers on a questionnaire were selected from research literature (Pullis & Caldwell, 1982; Safron & Safron, 1984; Swift, 1982) and were chosen on the basis of implied or established relationship to student achievement. These descriptors included a number of behavioral, aptitude, and independence attributes as well as personal and ethnographic characteristics such as gender, race, native language, and age.

4. Procedures

Each teacher was asked to complete a "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire" (see Appendix A), which was divided into five sections, each headed by one of the significant student descriptor characteristics identified above. Under each heading, teachers were asked to rate or identify the characteristics of two students whom they had referred to special education services between January 1990 and January 1991.

Section I of the questionnaire requested personal and ethnographic information about the students referred; the responses are summarized in Table 3 on page 37.

Table 3 Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire: Teacher/Student Data

School	Teachers Surveyed				Survey Sample of Students Referred 1990–91					
	Total #	Males	Females	Minority	Total #	% Males	% Females	% Limited-English-Speaking	% Minority	Age at Referral
A	12	2	10	1	14	64.5	35.5	75.0	60.0	10 yrs.
B	12	4	8	1	13	69.5	30.5	40.0	59.0	7.6 yrs.

Rating of items in Sections II–IV of the questionnaire was done using a five-point Likert Scale with a continuum of low values of 1 to high values of 5. A range of rankings of each descriptor was made to determine minimal to moderate disparity in rankings (i.e., teachers ranked their perceptions of behaviors or characteristics contributing to classroom failure). Minimum disparity across teacher rankings was defined by an item range of less than four points on the ranking continuum. Moderate disparity rankings were those items ranging between one to five points on the continuum. Items or characteristics meeting minimum disparity were considered significant and consistent attributes of children most often referred for special education services by classroom teachers. Table 4 on page 39 summarizes descriptors with minimal ranking disparity by teachers in Schools A and B.

Section V of the questionnaire asked teachers to identify and comment on the characteristics of educationally typical and educationally different students by identifying characteristics of successful and unsuccessful learners. They were then asked to identify characteristics common to themselves as learners. Table 5 on page 40 shows the frequency with which teachers selected characteristics of successful student learners, unsuccessful student learners, and themselves as learners in both target schools. Table 6 on page 41 details the frequency of learning characteristics by school, while Table 7 on page 42 shows the results of a test for agreement and significance between the learning characteristics of teachers and students.

Table 4 Student Descriptors with Minimal and Moderate Ranking Disparity

Student Descriptor	Range of Teacher Rankings	
	School A	School B
Avoids communication	1–4 (Mean 2.2)	1–3 (Mean 2.7)
Adaptability	2–4 (Mean 3.5)*	1–4 (Mean 1.7)
Blaming	3–5 (Mean 3.2)*	1–5 (Mean 2.5)
Confusion	3–5 (Mean 3.8)*	2–5 (Mean 3.0)*
Distractibility	3–5 (Mean 3.8)*	1–5 (Mean 2.8)
Failure Anxiety	1–5 (Mean 2.4)	1–4 (Mean 2.5)
Impatience	2–4 (Mean 3.0)*	1–3 (Mean 1.8)
Inattention	3–4 (Mean 3.2)*	2–5 (Mean 3.2)*
Irrelevant thinking	1–5 (Mean 2.8)	2–5 (Mean 3.2)*
Negative aggression	1–5 (Mean 2.5)	1–5 (Mean 2.0)
Need for direction	2–5 (Mean 3.2)*	4–5 (Mean 4.8)*
Need for persistence	2–5 (Mean 3.4)*	1–3 (Mean 1.8)
Poor peer cooperation	1–2 (Mean 1.2)	1–5 (Mean 2.0)
Need for positive mood	2–5 (Mean 3.2)*	2–5 (Mean 3.0)*
Need for positive behavior toward teacher	2–5 (Mean 3.0)*	2–5 (Mean 3.5)*
Socially withdrawn	1–3 (Mean 1.8)	1–4 (Mean 2.5)

NOTE: Rankings: Frequency of Student Behavior
1 = Hardly Ever; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Often; 4 = Frequently; 5 = Almost Always

* = High frequency behaviors

Table 5 Identification of Learning Characteristics in Successful and Unsuccessful Students

(24 Respondents)

Learning Characteristics	Less Successful Student Characteristics	Most Successful Student Characteristics	Teacher's Characteristics
Attentive	0%	74%*	63%*
Below grade level	0%	68%	11%
Withdrawn	26%	47%	11%
Independent	5%	63%	37%
Respectful	0%	68%*	61%*
High need for direction	47%	21%	5%
Cooperative	0%	79%*	63%*
Friendly	0%	68%*	61%*
Confrontative	68%	26%	5%
Angry	68%	21%	11%
Hard working	0%	89%*	79%*
High achieving	0%	47%	47%

NOTE: * = High frequency matching of characteristics between teachers and most successful students

Table 6 Frequency of Learning Characteristics by School

Learning Characteristics	School A (12 Respondents)			School B (12 Respondents)		
	Most	Less	Self	Most	Less	Self
Attentive	9	0	10*	8	0	6*
Below grade level	7	0	1	8	0	1
Withdrawn	4	5	0	6	1	1
Independent	4	0	5	9	1	2
Respectful	7	0	9*	9	0	5
High need for direction	6	1	0	6	0	0
Cooperative	9	0	9*	9	0	7*
Friendly	7	1	8*	8	0	7*
Confrontative	3	6	1	2	8	0
Angry	2	7	1	2	5	0
Hard working	9	1	11*	9	0	7*
High achieving	5	0	7	6	0	5

NOTE: * = High frequency matching of characteristics between teachers and most successful students

Table 7 McNemar Test for Disagreement Between Dichotomous Responses to Success and Self-Perception

Learning Characteristics	Self-Perception and Most Success	Self-Perception and Less Success
Attentive	1.0000	0.0000
Below grade level	0.0010	0.0001
Withdrawn	0.0039	0.4240
Independent	0.0654	0.0005
Respectful	0.6875	0.0000
High need for direction	0.0005	0.0034
Cooperative	0.6250	0.0000
Friendly	1.0000	0.0005
Confrontative	0.1250	0.0490
Angry	0.0654	0.0005
Hard working	1.0000	0.0001
High achieving	1.0000	0.0010

0.0001 to 0.0500^{+} = significant disagreement
0.0501 to 0.1000^{+} = significant agreement

An original assumption of this study has suggested that teachers of differing ages, years in the profession, and ethnic/racial backgrounds respond differently to high- and low-achieving students. Thus, continued examination of teacher responses on Section V of the "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire" has been made to provide more detailed personal information about the respondents. Table 8 on page 44 compares the responses of male, female, and minority teachers to questions about the learning characteristics of their most successful students. The frequency with which the identified student characteristics match with those of the teachers is recorded. In addition, comparisons are made between the responses of teachers from School A and teachers from School B as well as between teachers with 16 or fewer years of professional experience and those with 17 or more years of experience.

On the last part of the questionnaire, questions 5–7, teachers were asked to identify the items describing classroom climate and teaching approaches which had to change due to the mainstreaming into their classrooms of educationally different or low-achieving students. Respondents' perceptions of these changing conditions in Schools A and B are summarized in Table 9 on page 46. Tables 10 and 11 on pages 47 and 48 detail the frequency of style and climate changes by school.

In order to obtain more detailed information about teacher attitudes and supplement information provided by teachers on the "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire," three teachers from each school participated in follow-up interviews with the researcher. These teachers volunteered after being recruited by the researcher from among the 24 respondents to the "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire." Their answers to questions asked were recorded on the "Task Force on Mainstreaming Questionnaire" form (see Appendix A) and are described in the following chapter.

Table 8 Frequency of Learning Characteristics By Teacher Race, Sex and Years of Teaching

A. Sixteen or fewer years of experience

Learning Characteristics	% of Teacher Traits Matched with Most Successful Student Traits					
	School A			School B		
	Male	Female	Minority	Male	Female	Minority
Attentive	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%
Below grade level	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Withdrawn	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Independent	60%	70%	100%	100%	60%	0%
Respectful	100%	100%	100%	95%	100%	0%
Need for direction	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Cooperative	100%	100%	100%	95%	100%	0%
Friendly	100%	100%	100%	100%	95%	100%
Confrontative	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Angry	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Hard working	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
High achieving	75%	100%	100%	85%	100%	0%

B. Seventeen or more years of experience

Learning Characteristics	% of Teacher Traits Matched with Most Successful Student Traits					
	School A			School B		
	Male	Female	Minority	Male	Female	Minority
Attentive	75%	100%	n/a	100%	80%	n/a
Below grade level	13%	0%	n/a	0%	20%	n/a
Withdrawn	0%	0%	n/a	0%	20%	n/a
Independent	50%	50%	n/a	50%	0%	n/a
Respectful	95%	100%	n/a	90%	80%	n/a
Need for direction	0%	0%	n/a	0%	0%	n/a
Cooperative	80%	90%	n/a	80%	80%	n/a
Friendly	95%	95%	n/a	80%	60%	n/a
Confrontative	13%	0%	n/a	0%	0%	n/a
Angry	0%	0%	n/a	0%	0%	n/a
Hard working	86%	95%	n/a	90%	80%	n/a
High achieving	80%	95%	n/a	95%	80%	n/a

Table 9 Classroom Changes as a Result of Mainstreaming Educationally Different Children

Teaching Style Changes	% of Respondents	
	School A	School B
More preparations	80	100
More instructional materials	60	50
Different interactions with parents	70	50
Changed groupings	70	61
Modified grading	60	36
Modified curriculum	80	50
Varied methods	100	36
Adapted materials	90	36
More management	30	25
Changed expectations	40	25
Classroom Climate Changes		
More competition	10	0
Higher achievement for all	40	61
More group work	40	0
Less group work	40	13
Lower achievement for some	40	13
Tension	30	25
Less competition	20	25
Isolation of some	0	25
More cooperative learning	40	25
More productivity	10	0
Sharing	20	50
Fighting	20	25

Table 10 Frequencies of Style Changes by School

Teaching Style Changes	School A 12 Respondents	School B 12 Respondents
More preparations	7	6
More instructional materials	6	4
Different interactions with parents	4	3
Changed groupings	6	5
Modified grading	6	3
Modified curriculum	8	4
Varied methods	9	3
Adapted materials	8	3
More management	4	2
Changed expectations	3	2
No change	1	0

Table 11 Frequencies of Climate Changes by School

Classroom Climate Changes	School A	School B
More competition	0	0
Higher achievement for all	0	1
More group work	5	7
Less group work	4	0
Lower achievement for some	4	1
Tension	4	1
Less competition	2	4
Isolation of some	1	2
More cooperative learning	5	5
More productivity, harmony	1	1
Sharing	3	6
Fighting	3	1

The next chapter describes the findings of this study and correlates these findings with research literature to draw conclusions about the role of teacher expectations and biases in school failure.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The results of the field study of teacher perceptions in Schools A and B in Cambridge, Massachusetts, reveal striking similarities with the findings of educational researchers who have been examining school failure, institutional bias, and teacher preferences for the past 20 years.

A. Changes in Cambridge Population Since 1980

From 1980–1990, significant demographic changes took place within the city of Cambridge and its schools. While the total population within the city as well as the enrollment in schools declined, the numbers of minority residents and students increased. As the graphs in Appendix B illustrate, the city's white population decreased by 7.7% during the decade while the numbers of Black, Asian, Latino, and other minority residents increased by more than 50%. Age by race comparisons are shown on page 83 and indicate that by 1989 minority children constituted the largest percentage (55%) of residents under the age of 20 in the city, while minority adults made up only 4% of the citizens aged 65 years and older. The school/city comparison graph on page 84 shows the city's population at the time to be 77.5% white and 22.5% minority. However, due to increases in the numbers of young minority children in the city, the school population has most recently become 49.8% white and 50.2% minority. Since 1984, poverty indicators have shown consistently high numbers of children who are economically disadvantaged. Between 38–42% of all students in school receive free or reduced-fee lunches. During this same period, the numbers of students receiving special education

services has increased steadily from a low of 21.8% in 1985 to a high of 26.5% in 1989 to its present incidence of 25%. This figure substantially exceeds the statewide average special education incidence of 17.1%.

B. Veteran Teachers in Field Study

By the year 2000, the average teacher in the U.S. will be 50 years of age, and according to the Massachusetts Department of Education's personnel census conducted in 1990, the average Massachusetts teacher is already 43 years old. Among the 24 teacher participants in this field study, the age range extended from 29 to 55 years, with a mean of 40.2 years of age. These teachers had from 3 to 29 years of professional experience, with the average number of years in teaching totalling more than 19 years.

In School A, as represented in Tables 2 and 3, the total number of teachers was 26, of which 2 were male, 23 were female, and 3 were minority staff members. Thus, 12% of these teachers were male while 91% were female. Of the 12 staff members who became teacher participants, 2 were male participants (7% of total staff), 10 were female participants (39% of total staff), and 1 was a minority participant (4% of total staff). These participants from School A ranged in age from 29–50 years, with a mean age of 40.3, making the average teacher participant from this school younger than the typical or average teacher in Massachusetts. However, the majority of these teachers (8) had had 17 or more years of professional experience while the remainder (4) had had 16 or fewer years of experience.

During 1990–91, School B had a total teaching population of 19, with 5 male, 14 female, and 3 minority staff members. Study participants from School B included 4 males (21% of total), 8 females (42% of total), and 1 minority (5% of total). These teacher participants had a range of professional

experience from 3 to 28 years, with the mean number of years in teaching totalling 19.2 years. These teachers ranged in age from 24–49 years, with a mean age of 40.0. Eight out of the 12 study participants had been teaching for 17 or more years while 4 had taught for 16 years or less.

Thus, teacher respondents from both schools had similar years of experience in the profession and were close in age. However, a review of Table 12 on page 52 shows differences among some of the groups of teachers. In School A, female teachers not only outnumbered male teachers, but they also had more teaching experience and were older. In School B, however, the male teachers were older and more experienced, while at both schools the minority participants were the youngest and least experienced.

C. Male and Minority Students Referred to Special Education

The students selected by study participants for referral to special education during the 1990–91 school year because of low achievement in the two Cambridge, Massachusetts, elementary schools represent subgroups within the total student population in disproportionate numbers.

As indicated in Table 2 on page 33, School A, with a total enrollment of 504 students in 1990–91, had a population which included 267 (53%) boys and 237 (47%) girls, of whom 258 (51%) represented minority groups and 150 (29%) were limited-English-speaking (L.E.S.) or bilingual. Respondents to the "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire" from this school indicated, as shown in Table 3 on page 37, that the students most often referred to special education were those who were male (64.5% of referrals) vs. female (35.5% of referrals), were members of minority groups (60% of referrals) vs. majority groups (40% of referrals), and were limited-English-speaking (75% of referrals) vs. English-speaking (35% of referrals).

Table 12 Teacher Sample by Age and Years of Experience

	SCHOOL A Sample = 12			SCHOOL B Sample = 12		
	Male	**Female**	**Minority**	**Male**	**Female**	**Minority**
Number	2	10	1	4	8	1
% of Total Staff	7%	39%	4%	21%	42%	5%
Average Age	38.3	40.4	32	43.5	39.6	33
Average Experience	17.3	19.8	11	22.5	18.8	12

Similarly, the enrollment data for School B in 1990–91 shows a total student body of 394 students, of whom 208 (53%) were boys and 186 (47%) were girls, with 197 students (51%) who were from minority groups and 100 (25%) who were limited-English-speaking or bilingual. As Table 3 illustrates, questionnaire respondents from this school most often identified boys (69.5% of referrals) rather than girls (30.5% of referrals) and minority students (59%) of referrals) rather than majority students (41%) of referrals) for possible placement in special education. While the number of L.E.S. students referred to special education by questionnaire respondents in School B represents only 40% of all students referred, this proportion of L.E.S. students is greater than the proportion (25%) of L.E.S. students in the school as a whole.

As indicated in both Tables 2 and 3, students identified by questionnaire participants as having been referred to special education during 1990–91 because of failure or low achievement in the two target schools were predominantly male (65–70%), predominantly minority (59.5%), and frequently limited-English-speaking (40–75%). Based on data contained in the school department's 1990 *General Information Fact Sheet,* these figures are in excess of systemwide enrollment data for the same categories — male students (53%); minority students (50.1%); and limited-English-speaking students (10.9%), and indicate over-representation/over-referral of these categories of children into special education from teachers at both target schools.

D. Common Behaviors of Referred Students

Examination of teacher ratings of student behaviors on the "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire" indicates both agreement and disagreement about the behavior characteristics of students referred to special education in

School A and School B in 1990–91. Teachers in both schools ranked behavior descriptors on the questionnaire, using a Likert scale of 1 (infrequent behavior) to 5 (frequent behavior). As shown in Table 4 on page 39, the 10 problem behaviors selected with minimal disparity (i.e., a mean frequency of 3.0 or higher) by teachers in School A are *adaptability, blaming, confusion, distractibility, impatience, inattention, need for direction, need for persistence, need for positive mood,* and *need for positive behavior towards the teacher.* With similar frequency, teachers in School B identified 6 problem behaviors with minimal disparity. These behaviors include *confusion, inattention, irrelevant thinking, need for direction, need for positive mood,* and *need for positive behavior towards the teacher.* Thus, while teachers did not rank all behaviors with the same frequency and level of disparity, similarities in responses are noted. The behaviors which were commonly identified with minimal disparity in both School A and School B include *confusion, inattention, need for direction, need for positive mood,* and *need for positive behavior towards the teacher,* and indicate the behaviors which are likely to influence teacher decisions about referring students to special education.

E. Learning Characteristics of Most and Least Successful Students and Teachers as Students

Further identification of the variables which are likely to influence teacher decisions about referring students to special education is gained by examining the responses of teachers from both target schools to questions in Section V of the "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire." In this section, teachers selected the learning characteristics of the students with whom they had the most success, characteristics of students with whom the had the least success, and the characteristics of themselves as learners. Comparisons of

characteristics identified by each group are summarized in Tables 6 and 7 on pages 41-42 and indicate significant similarities between the learning characteristics of successful students and the characteristics of teachers themselves as students.

Applying the McNemar test for agreement to the responses of teachers in both Schools A and B yields significant agreement (significance = 0.1250) between the learning characteristics of students with whom teachers have success and the characteristics of the teachers themselves as learners. Analysis of responses indicate that significantly more pairs of responses agree than disagree. Using the same test on the characteristics teachers selected for the students with whom they had the least success compared with teachers' own learning characteristics shows significant disagreement (significance = 0.0010) because more pairs of responses disagree than agree.

In School A, teachers matched their own learning characteristics with those of their most successful students on 7 out of 12 variables. As shown in Table 6 on page 41, teachers paired themselves with students who were attentive, independent, respectful, cooperative, friendly, hard working, and high achieving. Similarly, in School B, teachers matched themselves with their most successful learners on 6 out of 12 variables. In this school, teachers paired their own characteristics with those of students who were attentive, respectful, cooperative, friendly, hard working, and high achieving. With consistent frequency, teachers in both schools identified their least successful students as angry and confrontative, suggesting that these behaviors influence negative teacher-student interactions and ultimate referrals to special education. Further, the number of common learning style traits shared between successful students and their teachers suggests that students with characteristics similar to their teachers have a higher

probability of succeeding in school than students whose characteristics are dissimilar from those of their teachers.

Consistency is noted in this pattern of compatibility between the learning characteristics of teachers and their most successful students when examining the responses of particular groups of teachers. As shown in Table 8 on page 44, the frequency with which student/teacher traits are matched is high for male, female, and minority teachers. In addition, with little variation teachers with fewer than 16 years of professional experience chose similar learning characteristics of successful students and themselves as students as did teachers with 17–29 years of experience. Both junior and veteran teachers also indicated similar reasons for referring low-achieving students to special education. Students referred for remedial intervention by both groups of teachers were largely from minority groups and were predominantly male.

F. Teaching Style and School Climate

Findings in this study have identified some of the student characteristics which are likely to negatively or positively influence teacher attitudes and promote or inhibit success in classrooms for certain students. In addition, some results provide insights into teacher perceptions about how the presence of low-achieving, special needs learners in mainstream/regular education classrooms affects both the style of teaching and the climate in classrooms. When asked in Section V of the "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire" to identify how their teaching styles had changed as a result of the inclusion of special learners in their classrooms, 50% or more of the teachers surveyed in both target schools indicated that they were required to do more preparations, use more instructional materials, and to change the

ways in which students were grouped. They also indicated the need to modify curriculum and their approaches to interacting with the parents of their students. As shown in Table 9 on page 45, teachers in School A, the school with the lowest percentage of special need students, also identified the need for modifying grading procedures, for using varied methods of instruction, and for adapting instructional materials. Importantly, teachers from School A were more consistent in their responses to questions about needed changes, with 60% or more of them agreeing on 8 out of 10 teaching style changes (see Table 6, page 41). The similarity of responses in this school may be reflective of the fact that classrooms in School A contain many special learners who are not identified and sent to special education placements. Because of long-standing, established school practices, referrals to special education have been discouraged and limited. Thus, many high-risk students do not receive special education services and remain the instructional responsibility of the classroom teachers.

However, when asked how classroom climate had been affected by the presence of special needs learners, teachers in Schools A and B showed great variation in their responses. As listed in Table 10 on page 46, the climate change indicators chosen by respondents both within and between the two schools were often contradictory, indicating confusion and uncertainty on the part of teachers regarding the practicability and/or desirability of heterogeneous grouping within their classrooms.

Forty percent of the teachers from School A responded that the effect on classroom climate was higher achievement for all and more group work. However, another 40% of the teachers in the same school indicated that less group work and lower achievement for some was the effect. Many School A teachers indicated positive effects on classroom climate: more cooperative

learning (40%); sharing (20%); and less competition in their classrooms (20%). Yet, a percentage of teachers indicated increases in tension (30%) and fighting (20%).

Teachers from School B showed greater consistency in their responses, as 50–61% of them indicated that classroom climate changes produced higher achievement in all students and promoted sharing. However, 25% of the respondents identified tension, fighting, and the isolation of some students as other effects on classroom climate. When applying the paired *t*-test to the responses to questions about teaching style changes compared with climate changes influenced by the presence of special learners, the relative frequency of responses for style was highly significantly higher than for climate (significance = 0.000). This finding indicates that teachers in both schools recognize and can identify the teaching style changes which are required when the make-up of classrooms becomes more diversified. These results also suggest that teaching style changes are viewed by teachers as being more important and more immediate than changes in classroom climate.

G. Interviews Support Survey Results

Three participants from each target school volunteered to participate in follow-up interviews with the researcher to supplement information provided on the "Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire." Interviewees from School A included two females and one male teacher, while interviewees from School B included three females. Each participant was asked questions specific to the focus of the study — expectations about low-achieving students, the inclusion of diverse learners in mainstream classes, equity issues relative to placement in special education, and resources needed to

enrich mainstream experiences for all students. Answers were recorded on the Task Force on Mainstreaming Form located in Appendix A.

The six interviewees were unanimous in their support of the concept that heterogeneity and inclusion of diverse learners in mainstream classrooms is appropriate, educationally sound, and potentially enriching for all students. However, each made negative statements about their own lack of ability and training to manage such diverse classrooms. Each expressed concerns about the negative effects heterogeneous classes could and did have on their more able or high-achieving students and cited the public perception that curriculum and activities have to be "watered down" to include special learners. Each teacher also criticized the inability of the school system to support teachers and students during the mainstreaming process.

When asked about the barriers to full inclusion for all students, teachers described problems of class size, the lack of staff development and assistance in classrooms, the lack of administrative support, the rigid expectations of other teachers (i.e., the next grade level of teachers to receive students), resistance from parents of typical or high-achieving students, and the inflexibility of existing policies on testing, textbook selection, promotion/ retention, length of school day/year, graduation requirements, and the grouping of students.

During these follow-up interviews, all six teachers were asked about the overrepresentation of males and minorities in special education and the obvious underrepresentation of females in remedial programs. Five of the six interviewees expressed surprise and disbelief of these facts, even when presented with copies of the October 1, 1990 state report on the count of children in special education in Cambridge, which indicated a total of 1,296 boys vs. 650 girls in special education placements that year. These teachers

were unable to relate the information to their own classrooms. The teachers typically made stereotypical comments like: "That doesn't happen in my class," or "Those kids need it [special education] and girls don't," or "What else can I do? Those kids are so far behind," or "It is because they are culturally disadvantaged," or "I wasn't hired to educate kids who don't want to learn."

These interviews confirmed earlier findings that many teachers are simultaneously willing to help poor achievers and unable to adapt instruction to meet the needs of these students. These teachers also confirmed their own and other teachers' lack of information and understanding about reasons why children fail, the developmental differences between boys and girls, and the role prejudice plays in school placements and treatment of certain children. They generally denied rather than acknowledged their own contributions to the differentiated behaviors often shown to poor, minority, and low-achieving students.

H. Study Questions Answered

The findings and results of the field study in Schools A and B in Cambridge, Massachusetts, provide answers to important questions cited in the introduction to this dissertation.

1. *Do individual teachers refer children of similar backgrounds for special help?*

In the study sample, many commonalities are found among the high-risk students identified by teachers in both Schools A and B. On questionnaires and in interviews, teachers identified a disproportionate number of language and/or racial minority children for referral to special education.

As shown in Table 3, approximately 60% of the children referred during 1990–91 were from minority groups, with more than 65% of those referred being male. Many of the minority children were from Latino, Haitian, African-American, and Portuguese backgrounds. In addition, a majority, more than 65% of these referred students, were from low-income families and qualified for free or reduced lunch in school. Interestingly, sample teachers of various races, ages, sexes, and ethnic backgrounds showed the same patterns of referring students to special education. These teachers referred boys more often than girls and minority students more often than majority students.

2. *What student characteristics are most commonly identified by teachers as the reasons for referrals to special education?*

Teachers frequently cited behavior problems in class and inappropriate social interactions with adults and peers as primary reasons for referring students to special education. While low academic skill development was often reported as a secondary reason for referrals, more often teachers complained of students who were inattentive, unmotivated, truant, angry, confrontative, and disruptive of the learning process (particularly for other students in their classrooms). Most teachers in the sample referred students who presented challenges to classroom management, control, and teacher authority.

3/4. *What characteristics are shared by teachers who refer large (or small) numbers of students to special education?*

The characteristics of teachers participating in the study from both Schools A and B (the schools with the smallest and largest numbers of special education students, respectively) were more similar than dissimilar. Teachers from both schools tended to be experienced professionals with from

17–19 years in the profession. Most had taught in only one or two grade levels and in only one school. Many had never worked outside of the Cambridge School Department. Typically, these teachers were white females in their late thirties or early forties. With little variation, male, female, and minority teachers in the sample from both schools described themselves as attentive, respectful, cooperative, friendly, hard working, and high-achieving students when they were in school.

5. *Are teachers likely to refer children like or unlike themselves in socioeconomic level, cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, and gender?*

Teachers described students with whom they had the most success as having learning characteristics similar to their own learning traits. Sample teachers matched their own learning characteristics with those of their successful students on 7 out of 12 variables and did not match themselves with students with whom they had the least success. Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8 show the consistency with which teachers rate their most and least successful students. Ultimately, the majority of students referred to special education were dissimilar from their teachers in respect to learning style, ethnicity, and gender.

6. *What recommendations can be made to limit the referrals to special education?*

The last chapter of this dissertation details several recommendations which, if implemented, would substantially reduce the numbers of children referred to special education. These recommendations focus on needed changes in staff development, curriculum and textbook design, school organization, student assessment, and systemwide policies which would promote challenging, stimulating, unbiased, equitable treatment of all students.

7. *Is the referral rate to special education more reflective of teacher attitudes or the culture of individual school buildings?*

In the target schools, the rates of referral to special education derive directly from the philosophy within each building. Teachers in School A show more awareness of teaching style adaptations needed for working with diverse populations of students because for years staff in that school have been reluctant to refer students out of mainstream classrooms for support services. School policy and practice have limited special education referrals only to students with substantial and obvious problems.

Teachers from School B have followed school policy and philosophy which have supported large numbers of special education referrals based on the assumption that the more services available to children, even separate, pull-out services, the better. These well-intentioned teachers have vigorously petitioned school officials for additional staff and programs to service increasing numbers of children who are failing in mainstream classrooms. Little attention has been paid to changing the regular education classes.

However, despite the differences in the reasons for referrals and the incidence of children placed in special education, the similarities in the types of children referred in both schools is striking. As shown in Table 3, teachers in both schools tended to overrefer male students from low socioeconomic and minority backgrounds, and tended to underrefer (undervalue) female students. Following present philosophy and practice in both buildings, many students being referred and placed in special education are, in reality, the victims of the racism and the biases of their teachers, their schools, and the school system.

These findings from the field-based study have broad relevance to circumstances in school systems in Massachusetts and correlate with many

findings in the extensive body of research and study of school failure, drop-out rates, and the differentiated expectations of classroom teachers. Many Cambridge teachers, like others, seem unaware of their roles in the differentiated perceptions and bias that often lead to school failure, and unconsciously contribute to it by lowering expectations for some students. As an example, when asked by Verberg and Medway in 1981 to explain the reasons for children's school problems, a group of 30 teachers from six urban elementary schools assigned most responsibility to parent-home factors, the next most to intrinsic, yet controllable, characteristics within the child, and none to themselves.

The last chapter of this dissertation expands on these conclusions and makes recommendations about reducing the negative, often stereotyping, expectations of teachers.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the field-based study in Cambridge, Massachusetts, schools corroborate many of the findings of research studies and educational literature. Both have examined the pivotal roles that classroom teachers play in educational achievement as well as the multiple variables which affect teacher expectations about student performance. The positive or negative expectations of teachers can and does influence high or low achievement in students. As shown and studied extensively, teacher expectations can be directly influenced by such student characteristics as physical appearance, socioeconomic level, race and ethnicity, handicapping condition, special education label, and gender. Pre-knowledge of these variables often prejudices teacher expectations and may positively or negatively affect teacher behavior. Under these conditions, negative or prejudiced expectations can have self-fulfilling prophecy effects on students who meet or live up to the negative stereotyping perceptions of teachers. However, research does indicate that expectations can be changed with improved information or evidence that students are capable of high achievement.

The results of record reviews, interviews, and surveys conducted in the two target schools in Cambridge support these research findings. Analysis of data indicate that certain variables in the backgrounds, behaviors, and learning characteristics of students who fail tend to clash with teacher experiences, expectations, and values. Influenced by teacher bias, misinformation, and feelings of loss of control over the learning environment, this clash or dissonance is both cultural and generational and contributes

significantly to lowered expectations, differentiated treatment, low achievement, and failure for certain members of today's diverse student body.

A. Major Hypotheses Substantiated

The major assumptions of this study are supported by analysis of data from the two target schools and indicate

- that teacher expectancy highly correlates with student achievement;
- that teachers have more success with students who are like themselves in social class, ethnicity, and learning characteristics;
- that teachers have less success with students who differ from themselves in social class, ethnicity, and learning characteristics;
- that teachers are more likely to show differentiated behavior towards students who differ from themselves;

One important hypothesis suggesting that differentiated teacher behaviors are more likely in those teachers with 17 or more years in the profession was not substantiated during the field study. Teacher responses to questions about the characteristics of students with whom they were successful or unsuccessful showed marked similarities. Male, female, and minority teachers consistently identified with minimal disparity the same learning traits in their most successful students. Significantly, these learning characteristics frequently matched learning characteristics which the teachers used to describe themselves as learners. As shown in Table 8 on page 44, teachers with fewer than 16 years of experience in both Schools A and B matched their own learning characteristics with those of their most successful students 60–100% of the time on 7 out of 12 variables: attentive, independent, respectful, cooperative, friendly, hard working, and high

achieving. Similarly, teachers with 17 or more years of professional experience matched the same 7 variables 50–100% of the time.

Interestingly, the patterns of referrals to special education also showed consistency and similarity in both target schools among veteran as well as less-experienced male, female, and minority teachers.. During 1990–1991, most children referred were male students from linguistic and/or racial minority backgrounds. These students were referred and placed in special education programs in numbers disproportionate to their numbers in the general student population. This pattern was followed by male, female, and minority teachers with little variation and suggests not only personal bias and differentiated expectations on the part of the teachers, but also institutional bias and rigidity within the school system.

For most of this century, highest expectations have been held for white, male students who display attentive, independent, cooperative, friendly, hard working, and high-achieving behaviors in school. These expectations have been reinforced by societal pressures and norms, and have been rewarded within most educational systems made up of individuals who model and expect these behaviors. Given the limited capacity and unwillingness of teachers and school systems to adapt to students with diverse learning styles, behaviors, and backgrounds, current practices and beliefs will continue to limit the achievement of female, minority, and certain male students.

Considering the combination of continuously changing demographics in schools, the probability that many of today's mid-career teachers will continue teaching during the next 15–20 years, and the specter of financial and spiritual withdrawal from school reform movements, the need for school restructuring and teacher renewal has reached crisis proportions in

importance. Without comprehensive change, we can be certain that teachers will continue to maintain high expectations for students they perceive to be intelligent, competent in English, middle class, high achieving, and male; that students for whom teachers have high expectations will tend to fulfill those expectations; that teachers will continue to hold lower expectations for students from minority groups, those with handicaps, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, those who are bilingual, and those who are female or are males with poor achievement; that teaching practices in the twenty-first century will continue to reflect criteria and standards appropriate for students of past generations but inappropriate for present and future generations.

However, with renewed political interest in improving public schools, the present may be a propitious time for educational planners and reformers to petition for needed changes. Some educators such as New York Commissioner of Education, Thomas Sobol, are already involved in reform efforts of national significance. The state of New York is in the process of revamping its social studies curricula to emphasize clear commitments to the principles of democracy, diversity, economic and social justice, and the individual and society (AAUW, 1992). These inclusive topics are not unlike those advocated at the recent (July 1992) Democratic presidential convention in New York City. However, the methods and means for bringing about needed changes have not been clearly articulated. As the nation becomes more diversified, public schools will continue to be expected to meet the challenges of educating and improving opportunities for increasing numbers of poor and minority children. Unfortunately, this pressure to reform public schools grows just when competition from private schools and entrepreneurial

school movements drains away resources, middle-class families, and political clout.

B. Recommendations

1. Reform Curriculum and Textbooks

Clearly, reforms are needed in curriculum offerings and textbook development to provide better, more accurate information. Teachers need plentiful amounts of gender- and culture-fair instructional materials and textbooks as well as the support and recognition of administrators and parents. With more appropriate resources and a greater sense of empowerment, teachers will be better able to make decisions based on developmentally sound understandings of student needs, abilities, background experiences, and connected knowing.

2. Expand Staff Development and Teacher Re-Education

Of paramount importance to the equitable treatment of students and the improvement of school performance is the need to reorient, retrain, and reassign classroom teachers and principals, many of whom are unaware of the stagnation, prejudice, and indifference which characterizes their work.

Training must be broadly based, frequently provided, and contractually mandated. The re-education of teachers must begin with

- general information about various cultural, ethnic, and racial groups within the state (not just in particular schools);
- training in classroom interaction strategies;
- training in the use of developmental curriculum and practices at all grade levels;

- training in classroom management techniques (including the use of positive discipline);
- training in prejudice reduction;
- training in the organization of various student groupings and cooperative learning;
- training in the use of multiple texts and instructional materials;
- training in improving home-school-community communications;
- training in teaming and collegiality;
- training in understanding developmental differences in young boys and girls;
- training in meeting the educational and personal needs of students in cultural and linguistic transition.

In addition, evaluation procedures must include criteria by which the evaluation of positive job performance is measured by the use and effectiveness of equitable teaching and administrative strategies.

3. Provide Rewards and Incentives for Change

In addition to training requirements for all teachers and administrators, school system improvement efforts must promote and encourage the frequent changing of classroom and building assignments of staff by providing monetary incentives, compensatory time incentives, and peer coaching or teacher mentoring opportunities. The use of school space and the length of the school day has to be broadened to allow for teaming and shared planning. School systems also need to recognize merit either through salary differentials or the assignment of lead or master teacher responsibilities to superior staff.

4. Provide for School Restructuring and New Policies

Because of the rigid and arbitrary organizational patterns within many schools, the best use of space, personal, and resources is frequently not made. Thus, opportunities for shared experiences such as heterogeneous grouping, cross-age tutoring, and cooperative learning, which promote inclusion, student empowerment, and self-directed learning, are often limited. School organization and the use of buildings must become more flexible to allow for multi-level grading, team teaching, exploratory/discovery learning, and the blending or mixing of classroom groups.

In addition, teachers and administrators have to be allowed greater flexibility and autonomy in implementing local and state mandates governing the length of the school day and year, promotion of students, as well as the testing and placement of students so that schools can adjust and readjust to the changing needs of student populations.

5. Provide Meaningful and Appropriate Assessments

Because of the historical reliance on norm-referenced and standardized testing results to determine student placements, many students, particularly those from non-American cultures, have been placed inappropriately in non-standard, remedial programs. Many commonly used standardized tests have proven to be culturally biased in assessing limited-English-speaking and racially different children, and have been frequently involved in the misdiagnosis of poor students from inner cities. More appropriate measures of student progress such as portfolio assessments and curriculum-based assessments need to replace these commonly used measures so that children can be assessed from year to year and compared with themselves in performance using classroom-related activities.

As Jim Cummins, from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, reports in "Empowering Minority Students" (1986), America is one of the most racist societies in the industrial world. But America is also the most aware of its shortcomings and is most self-conscious about the need for improvement. The challenge for America's schools is immense. As Cummins says, "It is not that students of non-white races or non-European cultures are harder to educate than those of the mainstream U.S. culture. It is that they may be, in many important ways, different and that the educational system simply has not geared to understand, respect, and address the needs of such tremendous heterogeneity" (p. 18). However, with the increasing disenfranchisement of minority groups and the growing disorder within our communities, American schools have little choice but to meet the challenge of effectively and equitably educating all students.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: (OPTIONAL - In part or in whole)

NAME: _____

YEARS AS TEACHER: _____ IN CAMBRIDGE: _____

GRADE LEVELS TAUGHT: NOW _____ PAST _____

CERTIFICATIONS: _____

OTHER PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS HELD: _____

UNDERGRADUATE STUDY AREA: _____

GRADUATE SCHOOL CONCENTRATION: _____

DATE OF MOST RECENT DEGREE: _____

DATE OF MOST RECENT TRAINING: _____

Responding to a growing spirit of inclusion within elementary and secondary schools throughout the State, many school systems have attempted to enrich activities within regular classrooms so that all students are given appropriate opportunities to become high achievers. The integration of students of various learning styles (special needs, gifted, Chapter I, multi-cultural, etc.) into regular classrooms is generally referred to as mainstreaming and often involves adjustments in standard classroom activities. Since successful mainstreaming is a goal of many parents, staff, and School Committee members in Cambridge, I am distributing this questionnaire and ask your assistance in completing it. The purposes for collecting this data are to learn more about children who are not succeeding in our schools and to determine needed supports for classroom teachers attempting to integrate both "typical" and "different" learners.

Would you kindly complete the following items which ask you to rate, compare, and describe your perceptions and interactions with two students who were not meeting academic and/or social success in your classroom and whom you referred for Sp. Ed. services through a 766 Team Evaluation during the past year (January, 1990 - January, 1991).

Your cooperation is appreciated. Please return by March 12, 1991, to Bureau of Pupil Services, Administrative Center.

Marilyn E. Bisbicos
Coordinator of Special Education
(L.O.A.)

PART I. Aptitude: Kindly rate each student from 1 2 3 4 5
(Low) (Average) (High)

	Specify: M/F Race	Rate: Intelligence	Motivation	Social Skills	Academic Program	Working Up to Ability
Referred Students (Please do not use names) Student #1						
Student #2						

PART II. Behavior: Kindly rate the frequency of each student's behavior from
1 2 3 4 5
(Hardly ever) (Sometimes) (Almost Always)
(Use same students as in Part I)

Behaviors	Student #1	Student #2
Avoids Communication		
Adaptability		
Blaming		
Confusion		
Distractibility		
Failure Anxiety		
Impatience		
Inattention		
Irrelevant Thinking		
Negative Agression		
Need for Direction		
Persistence		
Poor Peer Cooperation		
Positive Mood		
Positive Toward Teacher		
Socially Withdrawn		

PART III. Independence: Kindly fill in the number which indicates each student's ability to work with or without teacher direction: (Use same students as in Parts I and II.)

1 2 3 4 5
(Frequently Needs Attention) (Some Attention) (Works Successfully & Independently)

	Free Play	Independent Seat Work	Cooperative Groups	Movement From One Activity to Other	Transition Outside To Classroom
Student #1					
Student #2					

PART IV. Placement Recommendation: Kindly fill in the number which indicates the school placement you believe would be most appropriate for each student next year (Sept. 1991 - June 1992). Use students listed in I, II, & III.

1 (Most Appropriate) 2 3 (Adequate) 4 5 (Inappropriate)

	Next Req. Grade w/o Support	Next Reg. Grade w/ Support	Retention w/ Support	Special Class	Private School	Other: Specify
Student #1						
Student #2						

PART V. Classroom Setting:

1. With what types of students have you had the most success? (Check one or more items.)

____ Attentive ____ Respectful ____ Friendly ____ Hard Working
____ Below Grade Level in Skills ____ Confrontative ____ High Achieving
____ Withdrawn ____ High Need for Direction ____ Other
____ Independent ____ Cooperative ____ Angry _____

2. Indicate the types of students with whom you have less success:

____ Attentive ____ Respectful ____ Friendly ____ Hard Working
____ Below Grade Level in Skills ____ Confrontative ____ High Achieving
____ Withdrawn ____ High Need for Direction ____ Other
____ Independent ____ Cooperative ____ Angry _____

3. Describe yourself as a student:

____ Attentive ____ Respectful ____ Friendly ____ Hard Working
____ Below Grade Level in Skills ____ Confrontative ____ High Achieving
____ Withdrawn ____ High Need for Direction ____ Other
____ Independent ____ Cooperative ____ Angry _____

4. Do you have special needs students in your regular classroom? Yes____ No____ How have have these students affected your teaching style?

____ More Preparations ____ Changed Grouping Arrangements ____ Varied Methodologies
____ Use of More Instructional Materials ____ Changed Grading Procedures
____ Different Interactions with Parents. ____ Adapted Instructional Materials
____ No Change
____ Other: _____

5. How has the presence of special needs students in your room affected the classroom climate?

____ More Competition Among Students ____ Less Competition Among Students
____ Higher Achievement for All ____ Less Scapegoating
____ More Group Work ____ Less Group Work ____ Sharing ____ Fighting
____ Lowering of Achievement for Some
____ Tension ____ More Productivity, Harmony ____ More Cooperative Learning
____ Isolation of Some Students ____ Other: _____

6. How many students have you referred for special education help during the past year? (January 1990 - January 1991) _____

7. Please check any of the following changes/resources which could help your regular classroom serve both "typical" and "different" learners more effectively and equally:

____ Money for Educational Materials
____ Money for Out-of-Classroom Experiences
____ Training Programs
Specify: _____
____ Parental Support
____ Assistance in the Classroom:
Specify: _____
____ Smaller Classes
____ Flexible Testing & Grading Expectations
____ Administrative Support
____ Modified Teaching Schedule
____ Expanded/Reduced School Day
____ Meeting Time (With Teachers or Specialists)
____ Other
Specify: _____

8. General Comments: _____

_____

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1. Adaptations: "Teacher Tolerance Scale" (Safron 1984)
"Devereaux Elementary School Rating Scale" II (DESBII) (SWIFT 1982)

2. Pullis, Michael and Cadwell, Josel (1982). The Influence of Children's Temperament Characteristics on Teacher's Decision Strategies. American Educational Research Journal. 24, No. 4, 825, 838.

3. Safron, Stephen P. and Safron, Joan S. (1984). Elementary Teachers Tolerance of Behavior Problems. The Elementary School Journal. 85, No. 2, 237-245.

TASK FORCE ON MAINSTREAMING
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

For the past twenty (20) years, Cambridge classrooms have successfully provided for the educational needs of students who are considered "typical" as well as for those considered "different" learners.

As you know the integration of students of various learning styles into regular classrooms has generally been referred to as mainstreaming and often involves adjustments in standard classroom activities. Last spring a task force on mainstreaming was initiated by the Superintendent to identify successful mainstreaming practices across the school system and to determine ways of enhancing and expanding learning opportunities in regular classrooms for all types of students.

Would you kindly assist this task force (made up of Cambridge teachers, administrators and parents) in its efforts to collect information from teachers by answering the following questions about experiences in your classroom and school. While your responses will be held in confidence some of your suggestions/ideas may be incorporated into a final report to School Committee.

Your input is needed and is greatly appreciated.

Marilyn Bisbicos, Coord. Sp. Ed.
(Task Force Chairperson)
Adm. Center
159 Thorndike St., Cambridge, MA 02141

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1. Is your classroom integrated with both typical and different (Special Needs, Multi-lingual, Multi-cultural, Chapter I, Gifted and Talented) learners. (Yes, No) Please describe the student population.

2. In your experience is it possible to mix students with various learning styles, abilities, and needs in the same classroom and have all students meet social and academic success? (Yes, No) Comments. . .

3. Under what circumstances can classrooms meet the needs of both typical and diverse learners?

4. What techniques and approaches have you found successful?

5. Historically, Special Education classrooms and programs in Massachusetts have included large numbers of minority students and more boys than girls. To your experience is this placement pattern true in Cambridge? Please comment_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Is there a policy/procedure for referring children suspected of having special needs in your building for a 766 evaluation? --yes,--no Please explain_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please check any of the following changes or resources which would help to expand your effectiveness as a classroom teacher of typical and different students.

- ☐ Money for Educational Materials
- ☐ Money for Out-of-Classroom Experiences
- ☐ Training Programs Specify:
- ☐ Parental Support
- ☐ Assistance in the Classroom Specify:
- ☐ Administrative Support
- ☐ Modified Teaching Schedule
- ☐ Expanded/Reduced School Day
- ☐ Meeting Time (With Teachers or Specialists)
- ☐ Other Specify:

General Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

Name: _____ Grade/Subject: _____

School: _____ Years in Teaching: _____

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

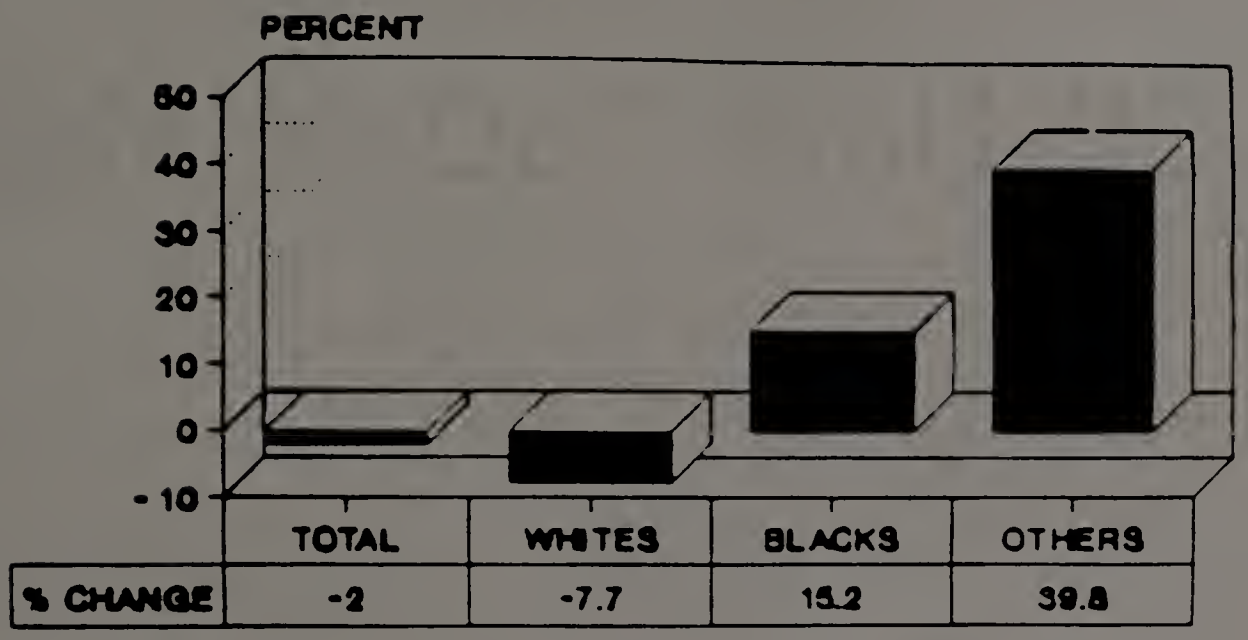
CITY OF CAMBRIDGE AND CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

CITY DEMOGRAPHICS
1980 AND 1985

	WHITES	BLACKS	OTHER	TOTAL
1980	78.46	10.418	6.444	95.322
1985	72.396	12.001	9.009	93.405
CHANGE	-6.065	1.583	2.565	-1.917

1980 1985

CITY DEMOGRAPHICS
CHANGE: '80 TO '85

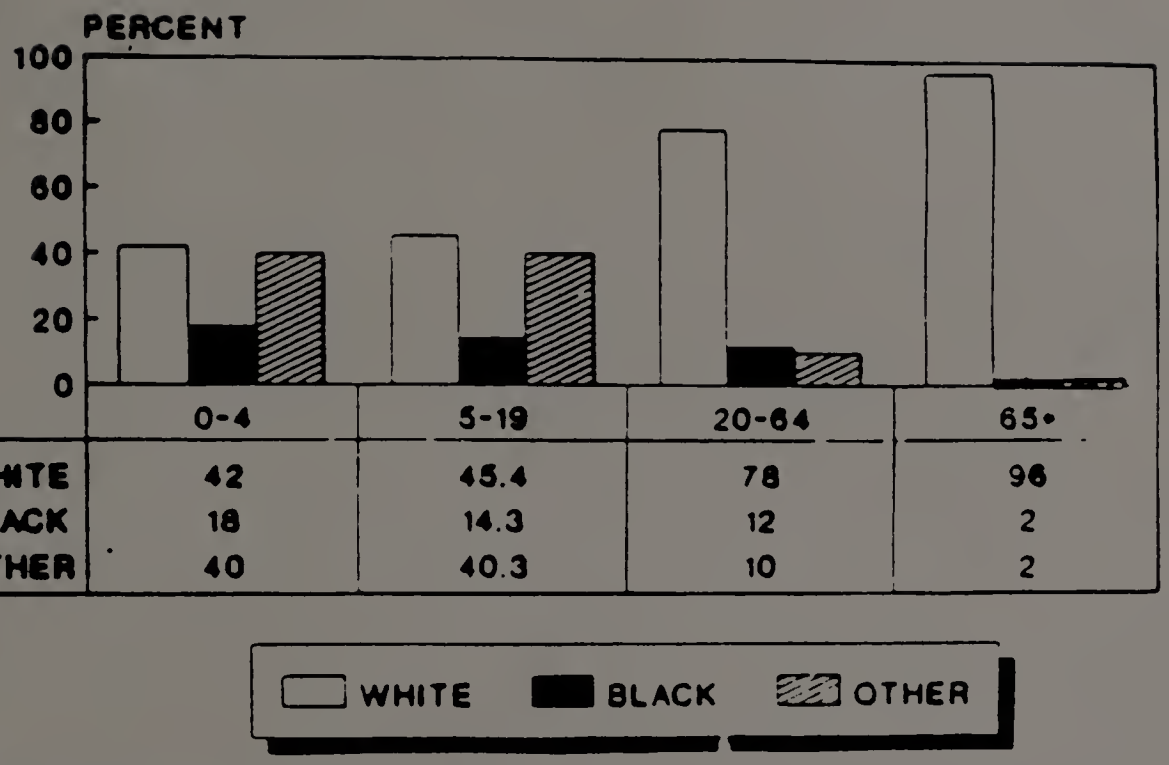


	TOTAL	WHITES	BLACKS	OTHERS
% CHANGE	-2	-7.7	15.2	39.8

% CHANGE

SOURCE: UNITED WAY OF MASS.

AGE BY RACE
PERCENTAGES



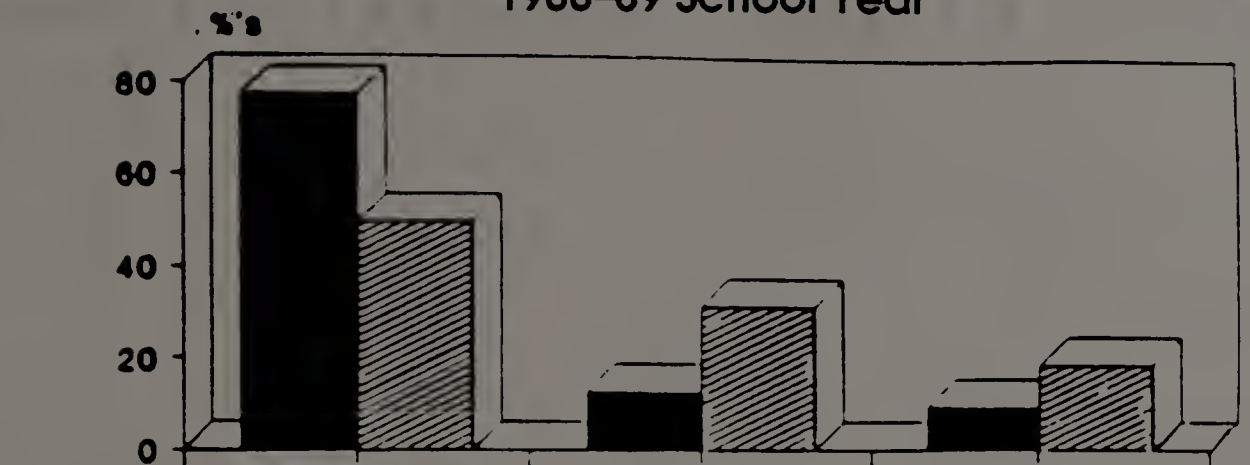
	0-4	5-19	20-64	65+
WHITE	42	45.4	78	96
BLACK	18	14.3	12	2
OTHER	40	40.3	10	2

SOURCE: UNITED WAY OF MASS. , 1986

SCHOOL/CITY COMPARISON

PERCENTAGES

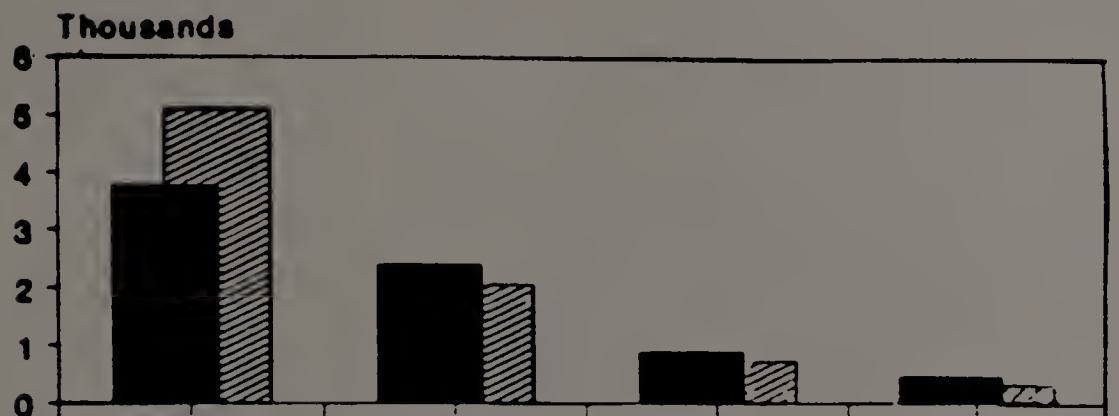
1988–89 School Year



	WHITE	BLACK	OTHER
CITY	77.5	12.8	9.6
SCHOOL	49.8	31.5	18.7

CITY SCHOOL

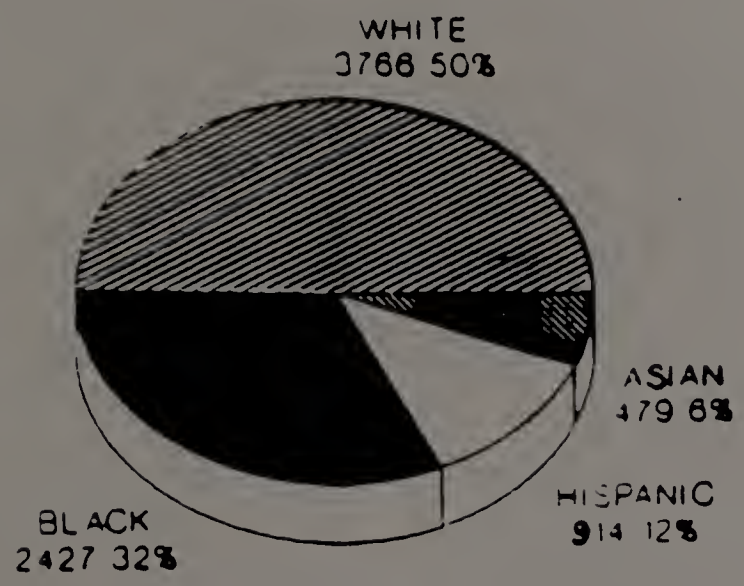
STUDENT ENROLLMENT
1982 AND 1989



	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN
1989	3.766	2.427	0.914	0.479
1982	5.106	2.079	0.731	0.269
CHANGE	-1.34	0.348	0.183	0 21

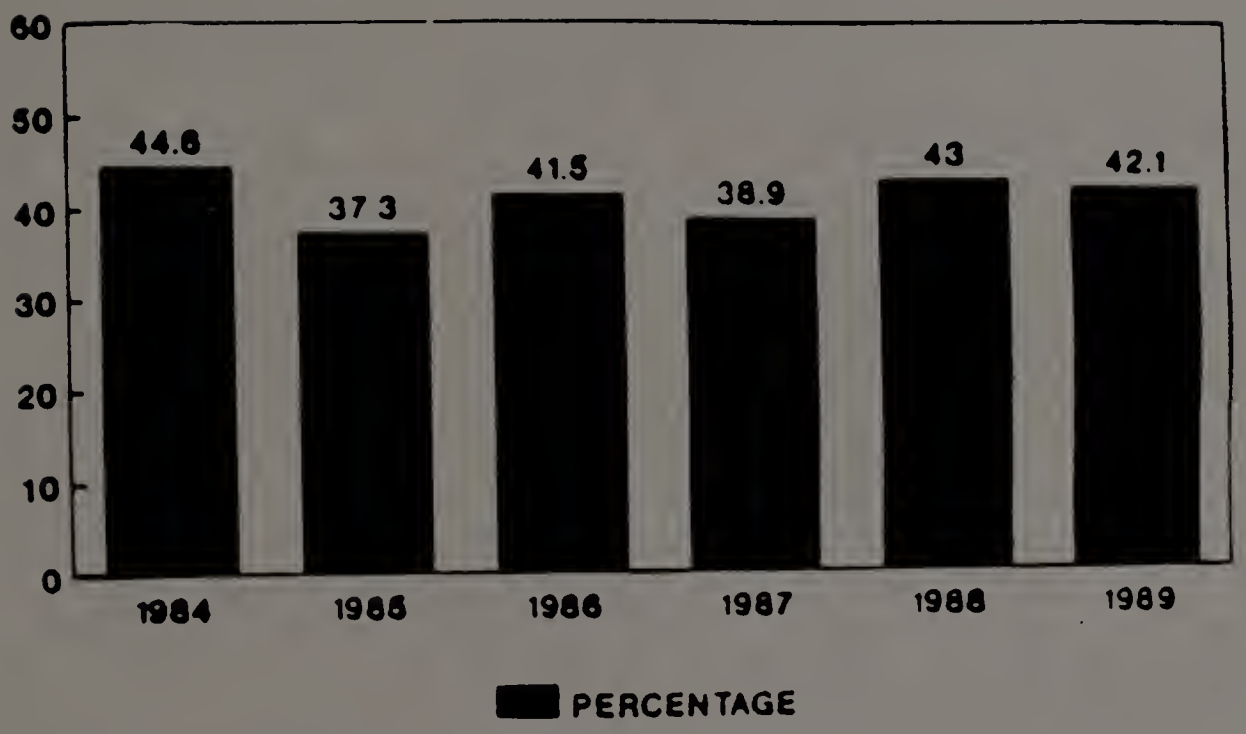
1989 1982

STUDENT ENROLLMENT
BY RACE



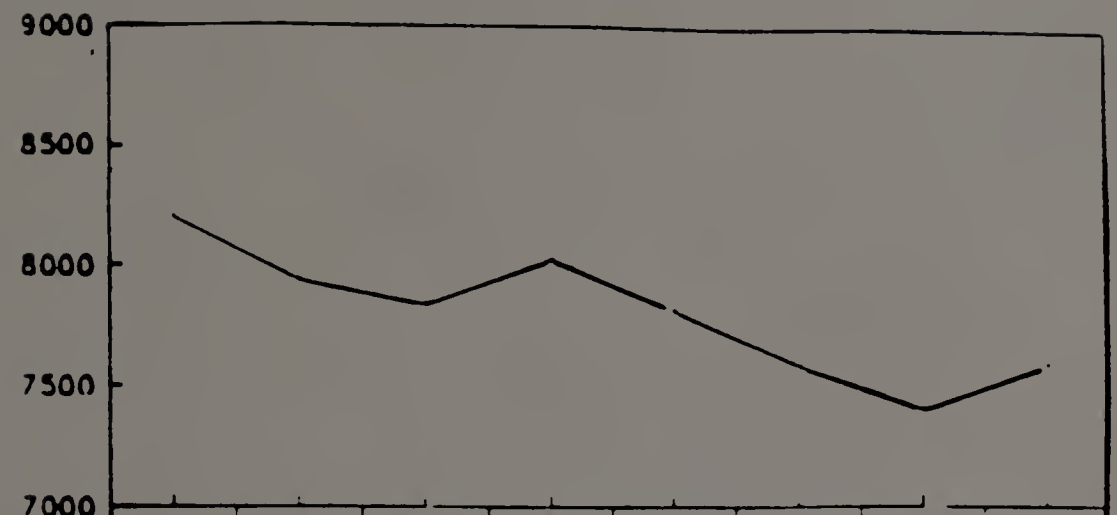
1988-1989 SCHOOL YEAR

POVERTY INDICATOR
SCHOOL LUNCH



SOURCE: CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

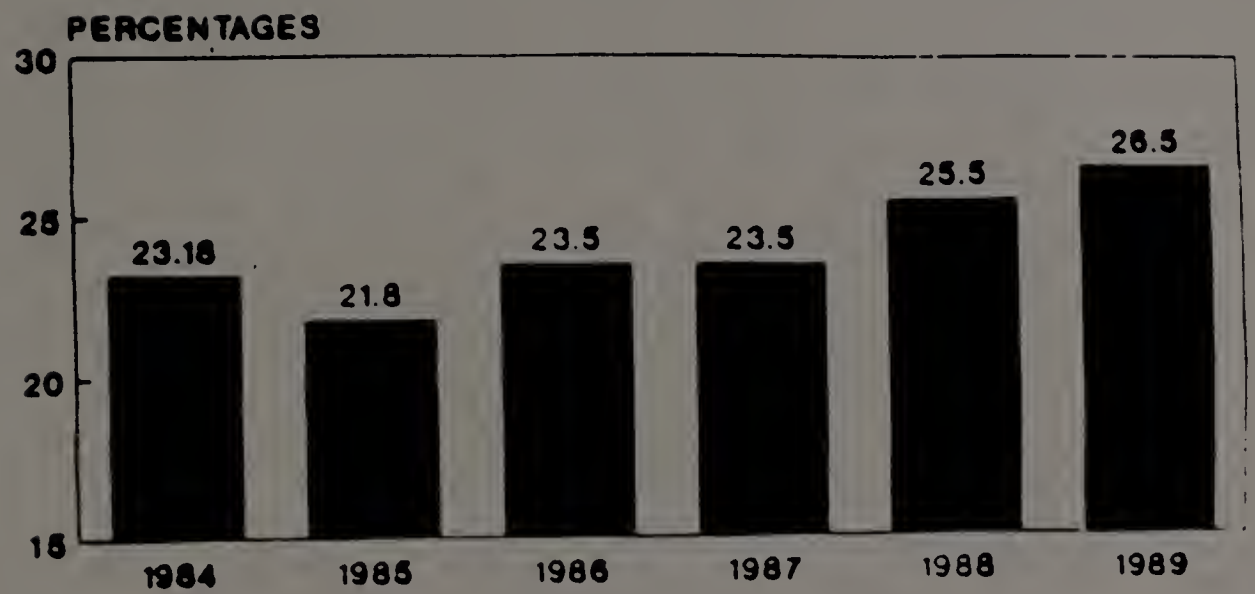
ENROLLMENT TREND
1982 to 1989



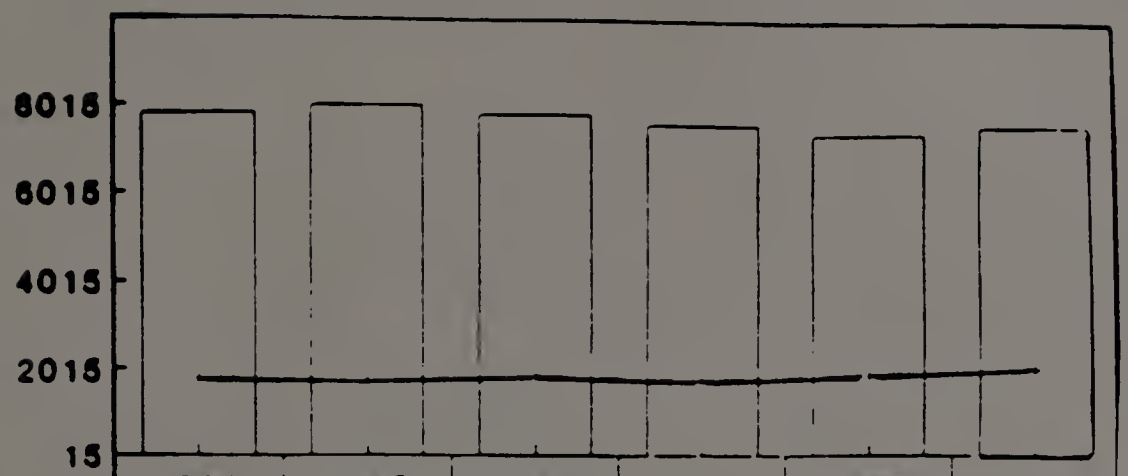
	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
ENROLLMENT	8202	7938	7834	8025	7810	7586	7407	7504

— ENROLLMENT

SPECIAL EDUCATION
1984-1989



SPECIAL EDUCATION
1984-1989



	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
TOTAL POP	7834	8025	7819	7586	7407	7594
SPED POP	1816	1754	1842	1782	1892	2018

TOTAL POP — SPED POP

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